



Jordan Times

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250 missing in Bangladesh mishap

DHAKA (R) — More than 250 people were missing from a motor launch which sank in the Dhaleswari river after being rammed by a cargo ship Tuesday, police said. Police said four bodies had been recovered and 25 people had swum to safety. There was no trace of the remaining passengers. The launch Hasali was rammed from behind near the central Bangladesh town of Munshiganj. A salvage ship sent to the area lifted the launch out of the water. The river disaster came against a background of natural catastrophes that have devastated the poor nation of 105 million people in recent months. Floods in August and September killed nearly 3,000 people, destroyed three million tonnes of rice and left 25 million homeless. A cyclone Nov. 29 killed another 5,000 people and left a trail of devastation in the south. President Hossain Mohammad Ershad asked Bangladeshis this month to celebrate their national day with austerity. "In a situation like this, we cannot afford to be lavish."

Sharaa visits Tehran

NICOSIA (AP) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa arrived in Tehran Tuesday carrying a message from President Hafez Al Assad to his Iranian counterpart Ali Khamenei, Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency reported. The agency did not reveal the contents of the message. It quoted Sharaa as stating on arrival that he would exchange views with Iranian officials on the latest developments in the region and other issues of mutual concern. Sharaa was quoted as adding that support for the year-old Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories was the basis of unity among the Muslim and Arab countries in the region. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, who greeted Sharaa, referred to the strengthening ties between the two countries and praised Syria's support for Iran during its war against Iraq. Later Tuesday, Sharaa said that ties between Syria and Iran are "excellent." IRNA reported. "Iran-Syria relations will be further consolidated in the future," Sharaa said, according to IRNA. Sharaa was speaking after an afternoon of talks with Velayati.

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AROUND THE WORLD...

Arab League critical of Kenya

TUNIS (R) — The Arab League said Tuesday Kenya's decision to resume diplomatic relations with Israel was regrettable and disappointing. "(This) is a very regrettable decision... especially as the Kenyan government did not think it necessary to recognise the Palestinian state or even to welcome its proclamation," the league secretariat said in a statement. "The Arab League expected the Kenyan government would recognise the Palestinian state, which has won the support of most U.N. member states, rather than reestablish relations with Israel, that ally of the apartheid regime," it added. The league said Kenya's decision was contrary to the resolutions of various meetings on Afro-Arab cooperation, including this month's ministerial meeting in Burkina Faso.

UAE urges Iran, Iraq to seal peace pact

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) urged Iran and Iraq Tuesday to implement all aspects of the U.N. resolution providing for a comprehensive peace. "After accepting Resolution 598, we urge all parties concerned to fully implement it, in order to save the region the woes of war and reap the fruits of peace and coexistence," UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan said in a speech to parliament. Iran and Iraq have agreed a ceasefire but have made little further progress in U.N.-brokered peace talks.

New OIC chief arrives in Saudi Arabia

NICOSIA (R) — Former Niger Prime Minister Hamid Al Ghabid has arrived at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) headquarters in Jeddah to take over the post of secretary general, the Qatar News Agency reported. He replaces Sharifuddin Pirzada, whose four-year term at the head of the 46-member group ends Jan. 1. Ghabid was elected last March at an Islamic foreign ministers meeting in Amman.

Storms isolate hundreds of Turkish villages

ANKARA (R) — Heavy snow and storms isolated around 1,000 villages in eastern and central Turkey, snuffing power lines and halting traffic, the Anatolian news agency said Tuesday. Roads to some 630 villages and towns in the eastern provinces of Kars, Erzurum, Erzurum, Mus, Bingol and Tunceli were cut by drifts over 1.5 metres high and bus services from Kars near the Soviet border were halted, it said. In northeastern Adiyaman, a heavy snow storm brought down power lines Monday afternoon, plunging the town into darkness. The storm ripped roofs from scores of houses but caused no casualties.

Even may go to court over scarves

ANKARA (R) — Turkish President Kenan Evren may go to court in an attempt to stop women university students wearing headscarves seen as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism, a spokesman said Tuesday. Evren early this month vetoed a bill which was to lift a 1986 decree banning scarves, among other forms of clothing, on university campuses. Parliament returned the bill with an article upholding the ban on all non-modern garb while exempting the scarves and Evren was forced to sign it after using up his single right to veto. The bill, published in the official gazette, went into effect Tuesday.

Tunis okays fairer electoral code

TUNIS (R) — The Tunisian parliament has approved a revised electoral code which gives opposition parties new guarantees of impartiality. The main innovation is that opposition parties will be able to sit on the committees which supervise the distribution of electoral cards and that an independent commission of magistrates will take the place of parliament in disputes over the regularity of voting.

Group says 3 fighters, five Israelis killed

BEIRUT (R) — The Palestinian group led by Abu Nidal said Tuesday its guerrillas killed five Israeli military in a suicide attack on an Israeli barracks on the Lebanese border. A statement by the Fateh Revolutionary Council (FRC) said seven Israeli troops were wounded and three guerrillas killed in the raid Monday. Israel Monday denied it suffered any casualties and said its troops killed three commandos near Manara. The FRC said the guerrillas fought Israeli troops in a military barracks for one hour and a half before reinforcements, including helicopter gunships, were sent to the site. One of its reconnaissance units accompanied the guerrillas and filmed the operation, it said.

Hirohito given new blood transfusion

TOKYO (AP) — Emperor Hirohito discharged a small amount of blood Tuesday morning after receiving a transfusion, but by evening doctors reported his condition was stable, palace officials said. Doctors administered a 400-cc cubic centimetre blood transfusion early Tuesday when Hirohito's systolic blood pressure fell and his fever started rising. Imperial Household Agency spokesman Kenji Maeda said. The emperor discharged a small amount of blood following the transfusion, but by evening seemed to be improving, he added.

Abu Nidal group 'saddened' by Pan Am crash

BEIRUT (AP) — Fateh-Revolutionary Council (FRC), the guerrilla group headed by Abu Nidal, said Tuesday it was "painfully saddened" by the crash of the Pan American Jumbo jet in Scotland. A statement by the group's spokesman, Atef Abu Bakr, said FRC "extends its condolences to the families of the victims who perished in this disaster." The statement appeared to be aimed at rebutting charges that Abu Nidal's group might have placed a bomb on Pan Am's Flight 103, which crashed in the Scottish village of Lockerbie Wednesday, killing all 258 people aboard.

U.S. navy warns of Gulf mine hazard

ABOARD USS FEARLESS (AP) — A U.S. navy officer warned Tuesday that mines laid by Iran and Iraq are believed to be drifting in the Gulf, particularly in the estuary of the Shatt Al Arab waterway that forms the southern boundary between the two countries. John K. Ross, skipper of the minesweeper USS Fearless, said during a briefing aboard his ship that about 180 mines were discovered in the Gulf since U.S. and other foreign navies intervened to protect shipping from Iranian attack in July last year. "I hope they're all gone, but I believe more mines are still here in the Gulf," he said. Ross noted that Western navies patrolling the Gulf have not ventured into northern waters, where Iranian and Iraqi forces were active until the Aug. 20 ceasefire in the war. "We've searched up to Kuwait, but no further. Someone has to check the Shatt Al Arab," he said.

Afghan attacks claim 28 lives

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Rocket attacks on Afghan cities in the past two days have killed at least 28 people, Radio Kabul said Tuesday. The western Afghan city of Herat was the hardest hit, with 20 rockets killing 20 people and injuring four, according to the state-run radio, monitored in Islamabad. One person died when rockets blasted Kabul, the capital, the broadcast said. The radio said several areas in the eastern province of Pakhtia bordering Pakistan, were hit by as many as 300 surface-to-surface rockets.

King, Mubarak exchange views

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday received a phone call from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The two leaders exchanged views on the latest developments in the Arab scene and the region.



HM King Hussein

Hosni Mubarak

Rifai, PLO team review developments, coordination

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Zaid Rifai and a high-level Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) delegation held talks here Tuesday on the latest developments in the Middle East.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Rifai and PLO Executive Committee members Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Arafat and Abdul Razak Al Yahya also reviewed Jordan-PLO cooperation and coordination.

The PLO delegation arrived here from Baghdad after attending a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee chaired by Yasser Arafat which reviewed the latest developments in the new Palestinian strategy for peace in the Middle East. The committee voiced total endorsement of recent statements made by Arafat in Geneva.

A statement issued by the Executive Committee after the three-day meeting in Baghdad said Arafat's speech and news conference remarks in

Geneva conformed with resolutions adopted by the Palestine National Council last month.

Symposium opens today

The Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Committee for the Steadfastness of the Palestinian People Wednesday begins a two-day symposium on housing and organisational structure in the occupied territories. The symposium will discuss working papers on the Israeli occupation authorities' plans for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the role of housing in enhancing the steadfastness of people in the occupied territories and the finance of housing, in addition to the housing situation in the occupied Gaza Strip and evaluating the joint committee's experience in supporting the housing sector in the occupied territories. The papers also deal with low-income housing projects in the light of the Jordanian experience in this field.

PLO gives full backing for Arafat strategy

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — The

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee has given full backing to Chairman Yasser Arafat for statements he made in Geneva recognising Israel and renouncing terrorism.

It also condemned dissidents who rejected Arafat's moves, which have led to a breakthrough in relations between the PLO and Washington.

At a news conference in Baghdad Tuesday, Arafat welcomed the resumption of contacts between the PLO and the United States.

"America is one of the two superpowers and a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council... and nothing can be done without its approval."

"Basically, we are not facing Israel... we are facing the unlimited support it is getting from its strategic ally, the United States," Arafat said after a ceremony at which he laid the foundation stone for a Palestinian embassy in Baghdad.

A statement issued after a three-day meeting of the PLO Executive Committee that ended Monday "reaffirmed that the speech by brother Yasser Arafat at the special session of the U.N. in Geneva and his press statement there were in harmony with the PNC decisions."

The PLO's top decision-making body also set up a legal committee to report within 10 days on what form a Palestinian government-in-exile should take.

Arafat proclaimed a new Palestinian state at a November session in Algiers of the Palestine National Council (PNC). The PLO says more than 90 countries have recognised the new state.

Palestinian sources said the committee members agreed to seek to upgrade PLO offices in countries that have recognised the state from information centres to full-blown embassies.

The PLO Executive Committee also rejected Israel's offer to grant limited "autonomy" to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and allow them to elect their representatives.

The PLO handed the offer by

(Continued on page 2)

70,000 remain missing after Armenia earthquake

MOSCOW (R) — Armenian authorities have collected the names of 70,000 people being sought by relatives after the earthquake nearly three weeks ago, TASS news agency said Tuesday.

The report said the names had been listed at a search headquarters in Yerevan, capital of the southern Soviet republic.

The officially estimated death toll still stands at 55,000. But authorities have declined to give a final toll as bodies of people killed by the Dec. 7 tremor are still being found. More than 10,000 people were being treated in hospital.

Many people who survived or who went to the area afterwards were unable to find out whether

relatives were dead or alive.

The seriously injured were evacuated immediately, and more than 100,000 women, children and elderly were moved out later. Communications were cut and help arrived at some mountain villages days after the disaster.

Staff at the Yerevan search headquarters compile files of photographs and personal data in the hope of uniting people who were separated by the tragedy, TASS said.

"It is where many people appeal with the last hope to find one's next of kin — and it is here where this hope fades," TASS said.

A senior Soviet official said

there were still 400 bodies buried under the rubble in Leninakan.

In an interview with TASS, Deputy Prime Minister Boris Shcherbina said 10,800 corpses had been found in Leninakan.

Eight thousand residents of the city of 290,000 were pulled alive from the ruins, he said.

His statements indicated there were fewer earthquake victims in Leninakan than in nearby Spitak, where officials say 16,000 people were killed, 80 per cent of the town's population.

Shcherbina said authorities were solving "the employment problem" caused by the earthquake by offering retraining to those who could not find a job in their own trade or profession.

More suspected looters held at site of Pan Am crash

LOCKERBIE, Scotland (Agencies) — Four people found in possession of bits of wreckage from a Pan Am Jumbo jet which crashed in Scotland last week have been arrested on suspicion of looting, police said Tuesday.

"It's really quite disgusting, almost unthinkable that such a thing could happen in the midst of this tragedy. It's quite despicable behaviour," Superintendent Angus Kennedy told reporters.

He said the four men were found to have aircraft parts and would appear in court Wednesday. Two were arrested Monday and two Tuesday.

Police have declined to comment on British press reports of looters removing jewellery from

the bodies of some of the 269 people killed when the London to New York flight broke apart in a fireball over the small town of Lockerbie Wednesday.

A police spokesman said 240 corpses had been recovered in a huge search operation in the Scottish countryside but 18 aircraft passengers and 11 townspeople, including three children, were still missing.

Families of the dead were told to expect the first bodies to be released to them Tuesday.

Another 200 troops were sent to join the 600 police and soldiers searching the hills and moors for debris that could provide clues to what caused Britain's worst aviation disaster. Divers will be

brought in to search lakes.

Investigators are examining whether the crash was caused by sabotage or structural failure in the 20-year-old plane, one of the first Boeing 747s built.

More than 600 rescue workers resumed their search for the remaining victims and for wreckage scattered over rugged terrain, dense woods, lakes and bogs.

Civilian and royal air force pathologists and a group of orthodontists were examining the bodies but expected to take another 10 days to complete identifications.

A suitcase and an unspecified amount of wreckage were sent

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Ghali: Israel must accept dialogue with PLO

'Mubarak visit contingent on Israel-PLO talks'

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israel must agree to talk to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) before Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak considers a visit to the Zionist state, an Egyptian minister said Tuesday.

"President Mubarak is prepared to visit Israel if it is ready to start a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organisation," said Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros Ghali.

He told reporters: "Egypt, which has always stressed the importance of a dialogue and direct contact between the PLO and Israel, will continue its endeavours to achieve this in light of the initiative by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Palestinian recognition of Israel."

Israel welcomed a statement last week by Mubarak that he might be ready to go to Israel. Asked if he was willing to visit Israel if it would solve the Palestinian problem, Mubarak told Kuwait's Al Anba newspaper:

"Yes, why not? If such a visit would lead to a solution of the problem and establishment of a just peace, I am ready."

But Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir remains strongly opposed to talks with the PLO and Israeli suggestions to revive the Camp David formula for Middle East talks are seen in Egypt as a tactical bid to undermine Arab peace efforts.

"They killed it, and there is no way now to renew negotiations on the basis of Camp David," said veteran Egyptian diplomat Tahseen Bashir. "Nobody will negotiate according to Camp David today..."

Bashir, who is retired from official service, saw Israel's return to the Camp David formula as a tactical move. "They are doing that because they know the Palestinians are against it and they want to put the onus of rejection on them," he said.

Aides to Shamir said Monday he would soon unveil new proposals envisaging limited Palestinian "self-rule" in the occupied territories, involving adjustments to the Camp David accords.

"Shamir is trying by this initiative to destroy the positive effects which the Palestinian peace initiative have achieved as well as the beginning of the American-Palestinian dialogue," said a commentary in Egypt's semi-official Akhbar newspaper Tuesday.

The U.S. this month lifted a 13-year ban on official meetings with the PLO after Arafat recognised Israel's right to exist in peace next to a Palestinian state.

Egypt would like to use this opening to encourage Israel to join an international peace conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

"Basically, we are interested in continuing the peace process which is going on, but not in reversing the process," said an Egyptian Foreign Ministry official.

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In an interview with the Japanese newspaper Yomiuri, Mubarak Sunday said he had no firm intention to visit Israel but again offered to go if necessary to achieve peace. "But it depends," he added. "I don't accept any preconditions."

Ghali's statement Tuesday clearly specified dialogue with the PLO as a precondition for the Israeli side.

Mubarak's interview remarks made a strong impact in Israel, the United States and elsewhere. Shamir immediately welcomed the idea so long as the Egyptian leader attached no preconditions to the visit.

Ghali's statement appeared intended to dampen expectations abroad generated by news reports about Mubarak's interviews.

Government sources also recalled repeated public statements by Mubarak in recent months demanding that Israel accept a proposed international conference as a framework for Arab-Israeli peace talks.

They said a Mubarak visit to Israel is "almost unimaginable" unless Shamir changes his position on the conference and accepts the PLO as a negotiating partner.

The sources said there have been no meetings in Cairo between any Israeli embassy diplomat and any Foreign Ministry official on a Mubarak visit, despite statements to the contrary by Shamir's spokesman, Avi Pazner.

Israeli officials switched signals Tuesday and appeared to be trying to play down the probability of a Mubarak visit.

16 Palestinians wounded in clashes with Israelis

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli troops shot and wounded 16 Palestinians in clashes in the occupied territories Tuesday, including a teenager who was in critical condition with a bullet wound in the left eye, hospital officials said.

In Jerusalem's crowded business district, a small bomb exploded in a garbage can, but there were no injuries or damages.

The worst clashes erupted in the Nuseirat refugee camp, a shantytown of 29,000 people in the occupied Gaza Strip, according to witnesses and officials at Shifa and Ahli hospitals in Gaza City.

Hundreds of residents poured into the narrow alleys to protest the shooting of two camp teenagers by troops earlier Tuesday and soldiers responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and then plastic bullets, witnesses said.

Six more boys were wounded, including one with bullets in his chest and face, hospital officials said.

In the West Bank's Balata refugee camp, 16-year-old Mahmoud Saqr was in critical condition after being struck with a bullet in the left eye, said officials at Nablus' Al Ittihad hospital.

Seventeen teenagers were wounded in clashes elsewhere, including a 15-year-old from Gaza's Khan Yunis refugee camp who was in serious condition with a bullet wound in the genitals.

The Jerusalem explosion occurred at about 9:35 a.m. at the central intersection of Jaffa road and King George Street. At the time, the area was crowded with shoppers.

The bomb, planted inside a garbage can, blew the lid off but left the bin in place. Police blocked off Jaffa Road for half an hour as explosives experts examined the site.

Police rounded up 13 Arabs for questioning, Levy said.

Also Tuesday, soldiers uprooted olive trees lining a highway near a Jewish settlement and imposed a curfew on the nearby

village of Beit Amin.

Four Palestinians withdrew appeals against expulsion orders before Israel's supreme court after the court refused to let their attorneys see secret evidence against them.

One of them, Sa'ad Baraka, was dragged out by police when the presiding judge denied his request to address the court.

"Shamir, Peres and Rabin are murderers of women and children," Baraka screamed, exploding in abuse against Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Vice-Premier Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Two other Palestinians struck a deal with Israeli authorities enabling them to return to their Gaza homes after five years if Israel determines they refrained from anti-Israeli activity while abroad.

All six deportees are accused of heading local committees of the underground leadership of the year-old uprising in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Family awaits return home of 2 French girls from captivity

PARIS (AP) — The family of two French girls held hostage for more than a year by the Abu Nidal group — and promised freedom as a Christmas gift — waited in vain Tuesday for the children's return home.

A spokesman for Fateh-Revolutionary Council, Abu Nidal's breakaway Palestinian group, said in Beirut Sunday that the little girls would be freed — "as a Christmas gift for the children of the world and their family."

But Marie-Laure, 7, and Virginie, 6, have yet to arrive in France.

"Never during our meetings... were we able to obtain, despite our insistence, a precise date for the liberation of Marie-Laure and Virginie," said Andre Metral, brother-in-law of the children's mother, Jacqueline Valente, also a hostage.

Metral spent the weekend in Beirut along with the children's father, Pascal Betille, and grand-

mother, Brigitte Valente. They met with Walid Khaled, spokesman for the Fateh-Revolutionary Council, Abu Nidal's group.

"I think this will go on several days more, perhaps until Friday," he was quoted as saying by Agence France-Presse, the French news agency, which interviewed him at the family home in Lyon.

The children have been held along with their mother and five Belgians. Mrs. Valente has given birth to a child during her captivity and is expecting another.

Abu Nidal's group announced their capture Nov. 8, 1987, saying they were seized aboard their yacht, the Silco, sailing off the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip. It claimed they were Israeli spies — a charge repeated Tuesday by Khaled who called the adult hostages "tools of the Zionist Mosad," the Israeli intelligence agency.

The first indication that Marie-

Laure and Virginie would be freed came on Christmas day. The announcement said the girls would be freed at the behest of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

On Monday, Khaled announced that the girls had been released and were en route to France by plane.

Earlier Tuesday, Khaled said that Abu Nidal himself met with the two girls "to bid them farewell at a secret Fateh-Revolutionary Council combat outpost in Lebanon."

But he would not say when the meeting took place or when the girls would be flown home.

Each announcement stressed the need for security precautions during the release, and one said the girls would be freed outside Lebanon.

Marie-Laure and Virginie "are very happy because they're being

(Continued on page 2)

Rebels stage anti-Kabul, anti-Soviet demonstration

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (R) — Rebels burned a puppet effigy of Afghan President Najibullah Tuesday and denounced Soviet peace moves at a rally marking the ninth anniversary of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Rebels, activists and refugees gathered in their thousands on an inhospitable rocky plain near the Afghan frontier in northwest Pakistan, chanting "God is great" and waving green and white banners.

Gulhadin Hekmatyar, leader of one of seven Pakistan-based guerrilla parties, repeatedly called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Kabul and accused Moscow of trying to divide Afghans by holding talks with rebel leaders and the former king, Zahir Shah.

"A non-Islamic government is not acceptable to us. We do not want any government imposed on the people of Afghanistan," Hekmatyar told the crowd of 10,000 Mujahadeen followers.

About 10 people, including men in military uniform, set fire to a red puppet effigy of Najibullah, hurled it to the ground and stamped on it until it disintegrated.

In Islamabad, Mujahadeen supporters did not stage their usual anniversary demonstration at the request of Pakistan authorities, who barred such events during five days of talks between regional leaders.

In New Delhi, about 300 chanting Afghan refugees burned an effigy of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during protests marking the anniversary of the Soviet intervention.

The ceremony in Peshawar was probably the last such demonstration because Soviet troops should be withdrawn by Feb. 15.

"After the withdrawal, the regime of Najibullah will be dismissed and Kabul will be unable to resist the Mujahadeen," Hekmatyar declared.

The current chairman of the Pakistan-based alliance, Burhanuddin Rabbani, has been visiting Tehran for talks with an eight-party group based in Iran.

Rabbani met Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Vorontsov in Saudi Arabia Dec. 3 and 4.

Last Saturday, Vorontsov, who is also ambassador to Kabul, invited the former king to join talks

in forming a broad-based government in Kabul after completion of the Soviet withdrawal.

Zahir Shah, 74, has lived as a semi-recluse in Rome since 1973 when he was overthrown by his cousin, Mohammad Daoud. Daoud was killed after the 1978 communist coup.

Stress on Islamic government

Spurning approaches to the former monarch, Hekmatyar declared: "We want an Islamic government and have no need for those such as Zahir Shah who failed to serve the Afghan people during their kingship."

He told the rally it was a crucial time for the guerrilla alliance. "Now we are at a most important juncture. We must be very careful and should bring unity to the Mujahadeen."

He said the rebels should not hope for too much in talks with the Soviet Union, whom he said were doing their best to prevent an Islamic government coming to power in Afghanistan.

The Kabul government has supported Moscow's talks with Zahir Shah, saying he could play a useful role in ending the guerrilla war, which has cost more than a million lives, forced thousands of Afghans into exile and caused widespread destruction.

The official Kabul Radio said Sunday that Afghan and Soviet leaders believed the former king could make a useful contribution to reconciliation, "serving as a balance between extremist leaders and the Afghan government."

Western analysts have said time was running out for Afghanistan with continued fighting and the Soviet withdrawal less than two months away.

In Islamabad, Mujahadeen spokesman Abdul Rahim told a news conference the seven-party alliance was not interested in doing any deals with Moscow.

"The people running the war (against Soviet and Kabul forces) will, I am sure, take power in Afghanistan," he said.

He said a second round of talks with Soviet officials would be held in Islamabad, probably within the next two weeks.



George Bush

No Bush plan for early initiative

BEEVILLE, Texas (R) — President-elect George Bush said Monday that he hoped a proposed visit to Israel by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak would improve Middle East peace prospects but that he did not plan any new U.S. initiative early in his administration.

"If I thought it would further the peace process, I would get on that plane right now," he told reporters at the Chase Field naval air station upon his arrival here for a four-day hunting and fishing vacation.

But Bush, who will be joined at the Lazy F Ranch here by Secretary of State-designate James Baker, added that "a lot of planning, a lot of policy review is necessary" before he engages in a new diplomatic effort.

Mubarak was quoted Sunday as saying he was willing to go to Israel if such a visit would help

achieve peace.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir welcomed Mubarak's suggestion. Shamir, appearing on Israeli television Sunday night, also said he would soon reveal a new Mideast peace plan, but he did not divulge details.

Bush was asked if he would be willing to travel to the Middle East if that would help.

"If I thought it would further the peace process, I would get on that plane right now and go," he replied.

But the vice-president quickly qualified his remark, saying that such a trip would be impossible immediately because he is not the president.

Asked what a Mubarak visit to Israel might accomplish, Bush replied: "I don't know."

But he said, "the more contact they have... the better it is... if that works out, that is fine."

Thousands of Sudanese protest government sugar price hike

KHARTOUM (R) — Thousands of people demonstrated in the Sudanese capital and two provincial towns Tuesday protesting at a government sugar price increase, witnesses and reports reaching Khartoum said.

Hundreds of riot police were deployed in the capital as several thousand people shouting anti-government slogans marched in at least three demonstrations, witnesses said.

The demonstrators called for the resignation of Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi's coalition government.

Witnesses said there were no clashes between police and demonstrators.

Thousands more people protesting at the 500 per cent sugar price rise demonstrated in the central town of Wad Medani and the northern town of Atbara, reports said.

In Wad Medani, Sudan's

second biggest city with a population of about two million, demonstrators occupied the offices of the regional government to protest at the price rise and call for the government to resign.

Representatives of 75 trade and professional unions in the town, 150 kilometres southeast of Khartoum, declared a four-day state of civil disobedience.

The government said in a statement Monday that the sugar price rise and a 50 per cent increase in the price of cigarettes were designed to raise funds to cover wage increases announced three days ago.

Mahdi said the wage rises would cost the treasury two billion pounds (\$444 million).

Reports reaching Khartoum said that thousands more protesters took to the streets in the town of Atbara, 280 kilometres northeast of the capital.

Atbara houses the headquarters of the Sudanese Railway Authority, the country's biggest single employer with a workforce of nearly 175,000 people.

At least six people were killed and scores injured in protests in October 1987 when the government last increased the price of sugar.

That increase was part of a deal on economic reforms signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The latest sugar price increase coincided with an acute bread shortage in Khartoum which officials have blamed on lack of adequate transport to take wheat and wheat-flour from Port Sudan, the country's only sea port, to the capital.

Pharmacists in the capital, meanwhile, began a one-day strike Tuesday to protest at a shortage of medicine.

Settlers plan to declare Jewish state in occupied territories

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli rabbi said Monday that a Jewish state called "Judea" would be declared in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip next month in protest against Israel's failure to annex the two territories.

Rabbi Michael Ben-Horin said a group, including Jewish settlers in the territories, would issue citizenship papers and had designed a blue and white flag, like Israel's but with a lion and a candelabra inside its star of David.

The group, numbering hundreds and backed by unnamed members of parliament, would declare a state named after Biblical Judea at a meeting Jan. 18 in

the Kiryat Arba settlement of the West Bank, he added.

"We plan to fill the political, defence and social void in Judea, Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza Strip," he said. "It is to be a paradoxical state. We are declaring independence in order to be annexed by the state of Israel."

Ben-Horin, 40, who lives in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, said the group, led by him, aimed to prevent creation of a Palestinian state. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) declared an independent Palestinian state last month but did not define its boundaries.

But Israeli legal experts dismissed the Ben-Horin group's declaration, saying it would lack the

force of law in the territories which are administered by the military.

Ben-Horin said Jewish settlers were angry because the Israeli army had failed to "protect" them from Palestinian protesters.

Some 70,000 Jews live in settlements among the 1.7 million Palestinians of the occupied territories.

Ben-Horin said his supporters included members of the militant Kach movement founded by U.S.-born rabbi Meir Kahane which favours expelling Arabs living under Israeli rule.

In a leaflet issued last month, the forum said it would not act as an underground group and wants to become a recognised political movement.

Tehran releases Briton

LONDON (Agencies) — A Briton imprisoned in Iran for more than two years returned home Tuesday after being released from a Tehran prison Monday.

Nicolas Nicola was met by his father and by Foreign Office officials at London's Heathrow airport following his arrival on a scheduled Iran Air flight.

He smiled as he walked down the airplane's steps, but was then driven directly out of the airport from the aircraft without commenting on his ordeal. The Foreign Office would not disclose his whereabouts.

News of Nicola's release first came from the English-language newspaper Tehran Times, which reported Tuesday that he had been turned over to British Charge d'Affaires Gordon Pirie

Monday. The newspaper report was carried by the official Islamic Republic News Agency and later confirmed by the British Foreign Office.

A Foreign Office spokesman hailed the release as "an important step forward" in Anglo-Iranian ties. "The Iranians up until now have been in breach of the Vienna convention in refusing to give adequate consular access to detained Britons," he said.

Another Briton, Roger Cooper, arrested three years ago for alleged spying, is still being held. Nicola was arrested in 1986 after an alleged shooting incident on the Iranian-Pakistani border.

IRNA said he was charged with illegal entry into Iran and possession of two weapons and a num-

ber of cartridges and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. The Tehran Times said the sentence was "reduced" and Nicola was freed Monday because of "good behaviour in prison."

Earlier this year, a British diplomat, David Reddaway, was allowed to visit Nicola and Cooper at Tehran's maximum security Evin prison. He reported then that both men were physically fit.

Cooper, 52, a businessman who has lived in Iran for more than 20 years, was originally detained in November 1985 for overstaying his visa. He later was charged with spying.

Nicola's release raised hopes that Cooper also may soon be freed.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran protests at French reports

NICOSIA (R) — Iran called in the French ambassador in Tehran Monday to complain about press reports that a French nurse had been tortured in Iran after being captured with Mujahadeen-e-Khalq rebels. The Iranian news agency IRNA said the Foreign Ministry director-general for European affairs, Mahmoud Vaezi, conveyed the protest to Ambassador Christian Graeff. IRNA said the French press, quoting sources close to the anti-Tehran rebels, reported that nurse Annie Azur had been captured during a rebel offensive in western Iran last July. It quoted Vaezi as saying no trace of the nurse had been found at any Iranian border crossing and no Iranian mission abroad had issued her a visa. If Azur had accompanied the Iraq-based rebels into Iran, "she might have been killed in the operations along with other mercenaries or perhaps escaped back to Iraq," Vaezi told Graeff.

North Korean delegation in Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — A ranking North Korean delegation headed by Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam arrived in Tehran Monday for talks on political and economic cooperation. Tehran Television reported. The broadcast said the delegation also included external Economic Affairs Minister Chung Son Nam. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and Reconstruction Minister Gholamreza Forouzesh greeted the delegation on arrival, the television said. It quoted the North Korean foreign minister as saying that the purpose of his visit was to expand ties between the two countries. He said talks with Iranian officials would focus on economic affairs, especially reconstruction, the broadcast said.

Spain, France to consult on Mideast

MADRID (R) — Spain and France will hold talks next week on how to carry out their European Economic Community (EEC) mission to press for an international peace conference on the Middle East, a Spanish Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Tuesday. She said the issue would be raised in a meeting in Paris Monday between Foreign Minister Francisco Fernandez Ordonez, who becomes chairman of the EEC council of ministers Jan. 1, and his French counterpart, Roland Dumas. The EEC last week agreed that Spain, France and Greece would contact Israel, the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to seek a peace conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israeli arms export orders 'double'

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin was quoted as saying Tuesday that Israel had received \$2 billion in military export orders this year, twice the reported figure for 1987. Participants at a closed-door meeting of parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee said Rabin gave the figure while arguing against cuts in the defence budget as part of an austerity programme. Military experts said in 1987 that Israeli arm sales had risen to \$1 billion a year from \$50 million in 1975. Israel refuses to discuss its arms deals in public.

27 smugglers killed or wounded

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian revolutionary guards killed or wounded 27 drug smugglers in a 24-hour-long clash in mountains near the southern city of Kerman, the national news agency IRNA said Tuesday. The agency said the smugglers had gone into hiding in the Nask and Harkam heights near the city some 750 kilometres south of Tehran after an anti-narcotics sweep through mountain villages there. Guards and Harkam forces (Iranian army aviation service) arrested several drug traffickers caught in the villages and a strike force of guards then clashed with the armed smugglers, killing or wounding 27 in fighting Sunday, IRNA said. The agency said ammunition and seven motorcycles were seized and five other motorcycles and equipment burnt. Mopping up operations continued, it added.

Bhutan recognises Palestinian state

TUNIS (R) — Bhutan has recognised the State of Palestine proclaimed by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in November, the Palestine news agency Wafa said Tuesday. The agency quoted in full a letter of recognition from King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat. The PLO executive committee meeting in Baghdad Monday said more than 90 countries had recognised the newly-proclaimed state.

Likud launches drive to change elections

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud Party launched a campaign Monday to revamp an electoral system that Israeli leaders blame for a 52-day delay in forming a government after elections last month. Likud agreed in principle to allow voters to elect a prime minister directly, a party spokesman said. He added that full details of how the system would function had yet to be worked out. Currently the prime minister is the leader of the party that has majority support in parliament. It took Shamir more than seven weeks to form a government as both Likud and the Labour Party courted religious parties in the search for a 61-seat majority in the 120-member parliament. Eventually Shamir agreed to join forces again with Labour, his partner in the previous four-year unity government. Likud spokesman Danny Naveh said the proposal would go to a joint Labour-Likud committee.

3 Palestinians die after dinghy capsizes

BEIRUT (R) — Three Palestinians on their way to mount an attack in Israel drowned when their dinghy capsized in heavy seas off the Lebanese coast, Palestinian sources said Monday. A fourth Palestinian survived. The sources said the rubber dinghy belonging to the Damascus-based Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PSF), led by Samir Ghosheh, was loaded with arms when it capsized Saturday off the coast at Jiyeh, 40 kilometres south of Beirut. The sources told Reuters the group was heading out from Beirut to launch an attack on northern Israel but was stopped by strong winds and high seas. The bodies of the three fighters were still missing but the fourth fighter returned to his headquarters in west Beirut, they said.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

PLO leaders back Arafat moves

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir a "new manoeuvre aimed at diverting world attention away from Palestinian peace overtures."

Shamir said Sunday that Israel will work towards an agreement with the Arab states on "self-rule" for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

He said if such an agreement was reached, he will allow free elections for an administrative council to run Palestinian affairs in the occupied territories.

The PLO statement said that Palestinians would not endorse any settlement that falls short of the establishment of an independent state to co-exist with Israel.

It cautioned the world public opinion "against falling for the latest Israeli trick," and stressed: "Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories which must be placed under United Nations supervision for an interim, transitional period."

"As for the latest election farce, the Palestinians have already chosen their representatives — the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians."

The committee's sessions were devoted mainly to the U.S.-PLO dialogue.

Committee members Yasser Abed-Rabbo and Abdullah Hourani briefed Arafat and his aides on the opening talks in Tunis with the U.S. ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Pelletreau.

PLO sources said.

Arafat said Tuesday he expected a Palestinian government-in-exile to include "personalities from inside and outside the occupied Arab territories."

He also attacked the Shamir proposal.

"Shamir must understand he cannot create a beautiful bride from a monkey... he can neither beautify Camp David nor (Palestinian) autonomy," he said.

Two Damascus-based PLO groups, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), issued a joint statement Monday saying Arafat's recent moves did not represent official PLO policy.

But the Executive Committee statement "denounced the odd voices in the region which had been pushed into isolation by the (Palestinian) gains."

The statement did not elaborate.

At his news conference, Arafat strongly criticised an Israeli decision to confiscate any money from the PLO brought into the occupied territories.

"The decision is aimed at strangling the economy of our people, who have relatives everywhere outside the occupied land," he said.

Palestinians working outside Israel and the occupied territories "bring in between \$600 and \$800 million annually... our people pay 38 different taxes (to the Israeli authorities), an unprecedented example in the whole world," he added.

Family awaits return of hostages

(Continued from page 1)

released. "Khaled" told the Associated Press. "They're eating chocolates and putting on weight."

The French Foreign Ministry says it is closely following the case, but would not speculate on the girls' eventual return.

Palestinian sources were sceptical about Khaled's statement that Abu Nidal had met the two girls in Lebanon.

"Abu Nidal has not been any-

where in Lebanon for quite a long time," said one source, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I can't believe he came in all of a sudden just to say goodbye to the two French girls."

Earlier Tuesday, a man who answered the telephone in Khaled's office suggested that stormy weather delayed the girls' arrival home. Several Mediterranean countries have been lashed by winter storms since the weekend.



Chadli Benjedid

Benjedid promises to press reforms

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian president Chadli Benjedid, reelected for a third term last week, pledged Monday to press ahead with political and economic reforms promised after riots in October.

"We shall work to put into practice all the reforms I mentioned, whether economic or political, for the sake of democracy, freedom of expression and the clear exercise of responsibility," he said in a broadcast seven-minute speech.

This would allow all "nationalist forces" to contribute to the development of Algeria and to participate in debate on important national issues, he added in the speech which expressed thanks for his reelection.

Benjedid won a third five-year term of office Thursday with the support of 81.17 per cent of those who voted. He was the sole candidate of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the party which has ruled Algeria alone since independence in 1962.

His main reforms, approved in principle at a party congress in November, will turn the FLN into a broad front grouping different points of view, separate it from the state and allow independent candidates to challenge it in elections.

Anglican Church Tel. 625383. Tel. 628343.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 688326.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811293.
Rainbow Congregation Tel. 823605.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 821264.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ibrahim Abu Otaib 675480
Dr. Munther Al Qarai 76258
Dr. Mohammad Al Ajlani 84184
Dr. Bahjat Badr 849362
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Asama pharmacy 637053
Nabuwat pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Waqar and Sewage 897467
Shamsani pharmacy 637660

1820:
Dr. Shihdah Al Zagh (—)
Al Shamsa pharmacy 953238

ZARQA:
Dr. Musa Odeh (—)
Khaldun pharmacy 953417

Civil Defence Directorate 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 199
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 198, 891238
Blood Bank 78303
Highway Police 943402
Traffic Police 639141
Public Security Directorate 656000 / 685111
Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information 12
Overseas Calls 17
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 623101
Abdell Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 648411, 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53300
Queen Alia Int. Airport. 08-532000

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldun Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Akheh Maternity, J. Amn. 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Melbas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsani 661171
Shamsani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muhsar Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdell 6612737
Al-Ahli, Abdell 661646
Italian, Al-Muhajirah 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marks 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 60234050
Amal Hospital 674158
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
BRIDJ:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272272
The Al Naefes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in J.S. per kg.
Apple 500 / 400

Banana 350 / 300
Banana (Mulkammar) 300 / 250
Beans 440 / 400
Broad beans 650 / 500
Cabbage 130 / 100
Carrots 250 / 200
Cauliflowers 200 / 150
Cucumbers 340 / 250
Dates 550 / 450
Eggplant (large) 90 / 50
Eggplant (small) 200 / 150
Garlic 260 / 200
Grapefruit 160 / 120
Lemon 220 / 180
Marrow (large) 100 / 70
Marrow (small) 160 / 120
Orange (French) 300 / 250
Orange (Shamouni) 280 / 220
Orange (local) 230 / 180
Onion (dry) 200 / 160
Pepper (hot) 300 / 250
Pepper (sweet) 300 / 250
Potato 260 / 200
Spinach 140 / 100
Mandrill 230 / 180
Tomatoes 340 / 280

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

KING CONGRATULATES NEPAL: His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday sent a cable to King Birendra of Nepal, congratulating him in his own name and on behalf of Jordan's people and government on Nepal's National Day and wishing him continued good health and happiness and the Nepalese people further progress and prosperity. (Petra)

PRINCE MOHAMMAD CONDOLES: His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad has delegated director of his office Turki Al Khreishah to convey his condolences to the Abu Shaqra family on the death of late pharmacist Subhi Ibrahim Abu Shaqra. (Petra)

HEALTH MINISTRY REPORT: The Health Ministry runs 457 health centres attended by 461 physicians, and 17 hospitals throughout the Kingdom, according to the ministry's annual report. The report said that the number of citizens in possession of medical treatment cards is 2,488,449, distributed among the various governorates of Jordan. (Petra)

TIES WITH YUGOSLAVIA, CHINA: Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Khaled Al Haj Hassan Tuesday reviewed with the Yugoslav ambassador to Jordan Zoran Popovic bilateral relations in the field of transport and telecommunications. Also Tuesday Minister of Agriculture Yousef Hamdan Al Jabr reviewed with the Chinese Ambassador to Jordan Chang Jim scopes of cooperation in the field of agriculture. (Petra)

THEATRE SEASON ENDS: Ministry of Culture and National Heritage concluded activities of its first theatre season Tuesday by showing children's play Al Kinz at the Royal Cultural Centre. The first theatre season began on Nov. 27 which included four plays and four seminars on theatre. (Petra)

HIGHER AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL: The Higher Agricultural Council Tuesday held a meeting at the Foreign Ministry and discussed the council's new draft law, which organises the council's activities, terms of reference and expanding the base of the private sector participation. (Petra)

LAND TRANSPORT TALKS: The general assembly of the Jordanian-Iraqi Land Transport Company is scheduled to hold its annual meeting in Baghdad on Jan. 10, 1989. The assembly will discuss the company's achievements, plans, and budget for 1989. The assembly meetings are expected to be chaired by the transport ministers of the two countries. (Petra)

UAE ENVOY HOSTS RECEPTION: UAE Ambassador in Amman Mohammad Jaseem Shukur Tuesday hosted a reception at the Plaza Hotel on the 17th anniversary of UAE's National Day. A number of senior officials and diplomats were present. (Petra)

CHINESE FILM WEEK: In accordance with the cultural agreement signed between Jordan and China, the Chinese Film Week began Tuesday at the Royal Cultural Centre in the presence of Culture and National Heritage Minister Mohammad Hammouri. This event is held by the Chinese embassy in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. (Petra)

DEVELOPING DEAD SEA COAST: The Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) is currently studying plans to develop the Dead Sea eastern coast. The JVA secretary general has said that the current organisation of the region includes defining the touristic areas and setting comprehensive development plans in light of opening a new Zara-Ghor road. JVA intends to exploit the 28 million cubic metres of water available in the region for irrigation and industry in the south. (Petra)

EC approves grant for agricultural projects

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Community (EC) has given the go-ahead for grants amounting to 2.5 million European Currency Unit (ECU) (about JD 3.5 million) to finance two projects in the sectors of water and agriculture. The funds are to be drawn from the Third Financial Protocol of the Jordan-EC cooperation agreement, which makes available a total of ECU 100 million as loans and grants for technical cooperation projects.

The protocol gives particular attention to supporting food production and improving irrigation facilities for farming. A grant of ECU 4 million will go to a national soil map and land use project designed to investigate the agricultural potential of the entire country.

This will involve a four year programme of land classification and soil studies, computerisation

of data and the preparation of detailed soil maps to be used as a planning tool in agriculture. The project will be carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Royal Geographic Centre and a firm of British consultants — Hunting Technical Services — who were awarded a contract for the project after a call for tenders.

The second grant of ECU 3 million will finance the investigation of groundwater supplies in the middle and deep level aquifers in the Azraq basin.

The information will allow better management of water pumped for irrigation, domestic and municipal use in Amman and Azraq, and will help alleviate stress on the shallow aquifer.

The investigation will be carried out jointly by the Water Authority of Jordan and EC consultants.

More suspected looters held

(Continued from page 1)

Monday to the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment in southern England "for more detailed examination to determine whether they exhibit evidence of a pre-impact explosion," Michael Charles, the top British investigator on the scene, said in a statement.

Transport Department press officer Penny Russell-Smith said the tests began Tuesday and might be concluded as early as Tuesday night.

The Times of London reported that the suitcase, noticed lying among wreckage, was ripped and torn and might have been damaged by flying metal. The report said investigators "should quickly be able to establish whether those

marks were made by an exploding bomb."

Charles' statement added that although no evidence of structural failure had turned up, that was still being probed as a possible cause.

Structural failure or a bomb have been identified by experts as the most likely reasons why the plane crashed just as it reached cruising altitude over southwest Scotland Dec. 21.

Britain's accident investigation board said it had not yet found evidence of airframe failure.

The rest of the aircraft was being loaded on to 18 metre air force trucks designed to transport aircraft debris.

The wreckage will be taken to Farnborough, an aviation centre south of London, to be analysed.

WHAT'S GOING ON

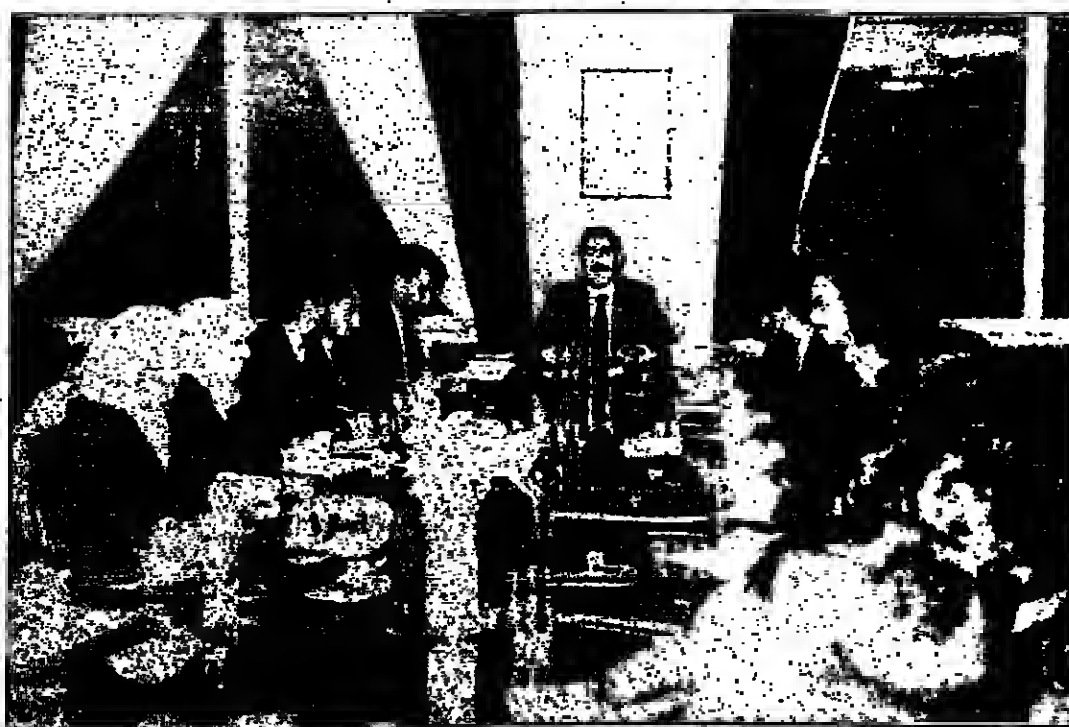
The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- * An art exhibition by Friends of Plastic Art in Gulf countries at the National Gallery.
- * The youth's art exhibition which displays 101 paintings showing the different aspects of social life in Jordan at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- * An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- * An exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz at Afa Art Gallery — 5:30 p.m.
- * The Jordanian plastic art exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre.

FILMS

- * A Video film entitled "Chariots of Fire" at the British Council — 7:00 p.m.
- * A Chinese film entitled "Two Spirits from the Jade Green Sea" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.



Minister of Interior Rajai Dajani Tuesday receives a student delegation from the University of Jordan at the Interior Ministry (Petra photo)

Dajani meets university students; stresses importance of national unity

AMMAN (Petra) — Interior Minister Rajai Dajani Tuesday stressed the importance of national unity, saying that it is the most important component of a strong and coherent society.

Addressing a student delegation from the University of Jordan, Dajani said the coherent and homogeneous society is the civilised society that can preserve the national achievements and that the strongest society is the one that can hold in the face of dangers, challenges and changes.

Dajani paid tribute to His Majesty King Hussein's wise policy which has won the King and

Jordan an international respect. He noted that the wisdom was proven in Jordan's solid and healthy stand and the moderation and political line that King Hussein has always been following.

Dajani pointed out that the Palestinian uprising in the occupied Arab territories, which came as a natural response to the suffering of the Palestinian people, under the Israeli occupation, has created a new situation and a new reality on the international arena.

The uprising has also crystallised new realities and has gained a worldwide public support embodied in the change of the

world attitude to the Palestine question, which has now become viewed as a cause for a people whose land has been usurped and who are demanding their freedom.

Dajani said Jordan is very concerned about the uprising because the people living under the Israeli occupation are a part of us, just as we are a part of them.

Dajani stressed the role of the self-educated and dedicated youth in making the future of their nation.

At the end of the meeting, which took place at the Interior Ministry's Assembly Hall, Dajani answered the students questions.

Public transport vehicles to carry annual licence

AMMAN (Petra) — Interior Minister Rajai Dajani Tuesday issued a circular banning all public transport vehicles carrying passengers from Jordan to other countries where they are registered or vice versa from passing through the Jordanian borders, no matter whether they are empty or full of passengers, unless they are in possession of annual transport licences from the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications and a manifesto, issued from the departure and

arrival points.

In a circular sent to the various ministries and concerned departments, Dajani banned all Jordanian public transport vehicles carrying passengers from Jordan to neighboring countries from leaving the border points, unless they are in possession of the manifest from the arrival and departure terminals.

In his circular, Dajani defined the regulations governing the transport of passengers either by buses, coaster buses, medium

sized buses or small public transport cars. The regulations banned the travel and tourist offices and companies from organising transport of passengers by hand, both inside the Kingdom and to destinations outside the Kingdom. The regulations also banned the sale of land transport tickets.

The new regulations will be in force as of Jan. 1, 1989.

Dajani also called on all travel and tourist offices to rectify their situations before the end of January.

PSD apprehends suspected killer



Gen. Abdul Hadi Al Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department has succeeded in apprehending the suspected killer of Ghalib Ashour Ahmad Mousa who was found dead a few days ago along the street linking the Third Circle with Naour road, Public Security Department (PSD) Director General Abdul Hadi Al Majali said Tuesday.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Majali said the investigators pursued their detection and search efforts to know the reasons surrounding the killing of Ashour after examining the site and the car found near the dead body, which belong to the murdered.

The forensic doctor's report said that the victim received three shots in his face, head and belly.

Following the investigations made by the police, it has been found out that the victim was suffering from financial problems and that he was involved in false real estate transactions, which caused him problems with others

including his father, who was one of the suspects.

Faced by the evidence collected by the police investigators, his father admitted killing his son and guided the police to the place where he hid the pistol he used for killing.

According to the PSD, the father said, he agreed with his son to settle their financial differences and while driving his son's car to an area located half way between Third Circle and Naour Road, the son stopped the car and left it after failing to reach an agreement with his father on their financial problems. The father followed him and shot him dead.

Seminar urges use of solar, wind energy to pump water

AMMAN (Petra) — A two-day symposium on the use of solar and wind energy for pumping water and generating electricity Tuesday called for increased cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Meteorology Department and the Royal Scientific Society in producing a wind and solar atlas.

At the conclusion of their meetings, participants called on the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) to bore new wells in the desert areas and to use the solar and wind energy in pumping water from such wells.

They called on WAJ to set up a special team for maintaining the pumping equipment, after receiving the necessary training at the RSS. They recommended that the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Finance Ministry exempt from customs duties and any other taxes all equipment needed for providing alternative energy sources.

In their recommendations they proposed that solar cells, electro-solar energy storage batteries be exempted from duties and taxes, and called for providing better means for using the solar and

wind energy systems through the national agricultural development project.

They also called for studying the energy requirements of farms for use by workers or for farm production.

They stressed the need to use the solar and wind energy for providing the village councils and remote residential concentrations with electricity.

Participants called on the ministry to coordinate with the Jordan Economic and Social Organisation for the Retired Servicemen (JESORS) in supplying some of the societies remote projects with energy.

Another recommendation by the participants called for holding specialised symposiums on the use of solar energy and wind energy for pumping water and generating electricity.

The two-day symposium organised by Labour Minister Marwan Dufin, groups secretaries

Amount of rain surpasses average by over 130%

AMMAN (J.T.) — The very cold air front that has affected Jordan during the last three days and led to the heavy rainfall and snow fall in the hilly areas throughout the country, has now moved to north Iraq and therefore a rise in temperatures is expected, Director General of the Meteorology Department Ali Abanda said Tuesday.

Abanda described the weather condition in Jordan through the last three days as unusual and said that the Kingdom started to be affected by cold fronts and air masses as of mid-December.

Commenting on the quantities of rain that fell in Jordan Abanda said they have surpassed the general average by 130 to 150 per cent, thus heralding the beginning of a new agricultural season and helping to increase the ground water reserves and the reserves in the dams.

The highest rainfall during the last twenty-four hours ending at 8.00 a.m. Tuesday, was in Beirun in Zarqa district while the lowest heavy rain was in Jafr with only 1 millimetre of rainfall. However most of the Kingdom's areas received good quantities of rain and snow.

The highest snow fall was in Jubeiha with snow at a height of 15 cms. There was also snow fall in various parts of the Kingdom, including Amman Governorate and Amman itself, Tafieh, Shobak, Wadi Mousa, Ras Al Naqah, Irbid, Ajloun, Jarash, Karak, Mu'ta, Mazar Al Qasr and Abu Hammour.

However the various agricultural department directors and the

Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General have recently said that the recent rains have revived the farmers hopes of a good agricultural season and added that such rain is very useful for the ground water reserves.

The Jordan Valley Authority director general said Tuesday that Kafra Dam received more than 7.5 million cubic metres, while Sharhabil Ibn Hasna Dam received 2.3 million cubic metres and Wadi Al Arab received 8.5 million cubic metres, as a result of the recent rainfall.

In Madaba district the Agriculture Department began distributing forest trees and fruit bearing trees to farmers at minimal prices. The department director said that a total of 30,000 olive trees, 10,000 vine trees, 1,000 apple trees and 3,250 other fruit trees, will be distributed to farmers benefiting from the highland development projects in the district.

In its efforts to open the roads that were blocked by snow, the Greater Amman Municipality Monday night and Tuesday morning mobilised all its emergency teams to cope with the situation created by the accumulation of snow.

The municipality teams used their machinery and equipment to open the roads, particularly those leading to schools, hospitals, ministries and government departments, in addition to public and private institutions.

The municipality teams also dealt with the people's complaints according to the availability of resources.

In Karak, the governor inspected the South Mazar roads, which were affected by the rain and snowfall during the past three days, and called for cooperation in coping with the prevailing conditions.

The Ma'an governor, on his part, also inspected the areas affected by the heavy rain and snowfall and supervised the works to open the roads which were blocked by snow in his governorate.

In Ajloun, the district governor inspected the roads and main streets of the town, Ein Janna, Ibbin, Eshtafina, Anjara, which were opened for traffic by Irbid Public Works Department, in cooperation with the Jordanian armed forces machinery.

Tawjihi exams postponed

As a result of the prevailing weather conditions and the snow fall, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thouqan Hindawi Tuesday decided to postpone the Tawjihi Arabic language examination, which was scheduled for Monday until Jan. 8 and fixed Jan. 10 as the date for taking the Islamic Education examination.



Snow fell in most parts of Jordan from Monday night until the early hours of Tuesday (photo by Youssef Al 'Allan)

Population committee to elect secretariat

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Committee for Population will hold a meeting Thursday at the Queo Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund to discuss the final arrangements for composing a general secretariat for the committee.

The committee, which is headed by Labour Minister Marwan Dufin, groups secretaries

general of the Ministries of Higher Education, Education, Planning, Health, Information and directors of the Passport and Civil Registration Department, General Statistics Department, the Armed Forces National Gui-

dance Department, the Jordanian Women's Federation, Yarmouk University, Mu'ta University, the University of Jordan, and the director of preaching and guidance.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES / VIENNA

THE FIRM: An internationally renowned financial institution with world-wide branches.

THE CANDIDATES:

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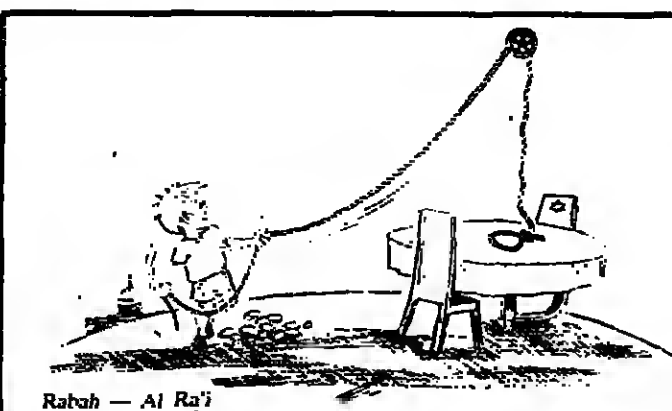
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The wind of change

IT APPEARS that Arab efforts, notably the Jordanian-Saudi initiatives, to remove the last vestiges of disagreements between Syria on one hand and Egypt and Iraq on the other are beginning to bear fruit. Not only did Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak offer to travel to Damascus in order to start a whole new chapter in Syrian-Egyptian relations but also Syria's President Hafez Assad has made an equally positive overtures to that effect by signalling that Syria would no longer oppose Egypt's return to the Arab fold. On the Baghdad-Damascus front, there are also positive and promising signs that relations between the two countries are improving and that it would not be long before they are on the right track.

As the year 1988 comes to a close, the best news that the Arab World can have is to hear categorical statements from the three Arab capitals ushering a fresh start in the brotherly relations between them. If the two superpowers are on the brink of hurrying the hatchet, as it were, and relations between China and India are warming up in spite of the tremendous disagreements between them, would it be too much to expect from Arab countries to follow suit and emulate the spirit of reconciliation that is spreading all over the world. Amman and Riyadh were correct in persisting in their relentless efforts to affect a real rapprochement between Damascus on one hand and Baghdad and Cairo on the other. What is even better is that such initiatives are coming to fruition. What remains is the formal announcements declaring the restoration of brotherly relations between the states in question.

There could be nothing more momentous to undertake in the wake of the restoration of fraternal relations between all the Arab countries than to convene an Arab summit to crown the bilateral achievements with historic Arab summit decisions that could serve as a nucleus for genuine inter-Arab coordination and cooperation. It is indeed tragic to witness other regions of the world realising a sizable level of coordination and unity of purpose when the Arab states should have been in the forefront of all other peoples and regions of the world on the path of institutionalised cooperation and coordination. And now that the remnants of Arab disharmony are on their way out, the Arab peoples can sigh with relief that finally the Arab countries are catching up with the wind of change in the world and are on the verge of emulating the experiences of other countries and regions of the world.



ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

Al Rai's Arabic daily wrote Tuesday on the start of the first Tawjihi examinations session to be taken by more than 58,000 students who completed their 12 years of school work. This large number of tawjihi students taking the examinations reflects the great achievement by Jordan in the field of education and serves as an indication of the real chance offered to all citizens to acquire education at all levels, the paper noted. It said that the examinations are the centre of interest for the students, the Ministry of Education, which prepared them for the session, and the families of students whose patience and support for their children are badly needed at this crucial moment. The paper wished the students success in their endeavours so that they can have a better chance to serve their country.

Writing in Al Rai's columnist Fahed Al Fanek praises the efforts of those who prepared for and executed a symposium to discuss means and measures to develop the Jordanian badia region. But the writer says that the meeting would have done a better job, had it gathered the long list of recommendations in a handful of concentrated points designed to bring a real change and development in the life of bedouin tribes and the badia region as a whole. Again he praises that the recommendations which called for the creation of libraries, the construction of health centres and the supply of electric power to all parts of the badia region and bedouin settlements, but he notes that the most important thing is to create pasture lands for farm animals which in turn can provide additional income to the inhabitants, help them to settle down and enable them to contribute to development schemes in their own region. The most important thing for bedouins, the writer says, is water supply without which no life can exist and in whose absence no housing, health or agricultural projects can ever be executed. The writer notes that the development of the badia region is a national challenge, requiring contribution from all sectors.

Al Dustour daily Tuesday tackled the situation in the Arab World which it described as very favourable, creating a good climate for constructive and fruitful work. The paper noted that His Majesty King Hussein's continued contacts with Arab leaders to end differences among them and the Palestinian uprising which has entered the second year were both instrumental in bringing the Arabs together and removing many of their differences. It said that the end of the Gulf conflict has given the Arab leaders in general, and those in the Gulf region in particular a breathing space and a chance to meet and talk once again about joint and collective efforts to serve common causes.

U.S. decision to meet PLO opens risky path toward peace

By Thomas L. Friedman

WASHINGTON — The decision by the United States to open a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has jolted the Middle East, almost as much as a war, leaving elation and celebration in the Arab World, shock and numbness in Israel.

U.S. Arab and Israeli diplomats and analysts say this sudden turn of events could, if handled adroitly by all the parties concerned, open the way for the first real Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations. If mishandled, though, they said, it could leave the Middle East further from peace than ever.

"We have just done something very, very significant, something that shakes the whole Middle East equation," said a State Department expert on the Middle East.

"We, the Israelis and the Palestinians are now sailing together in uncharted waters. We are going to have to feel our way along as we go, and move very carefully. The Arabs love us now and the Israelis need us now, so we don't need to rush. But we can't turn back."

The most immediate effect of the U.S.-PLO dialogue has been to force both Israelis and Palestinians to confront some realities that they have been trying to ignore. For a long time now, the Israeli government and the PLO have been living in their own imagined time zones.

In the PLO time zone, it was always 1947 — PLO leaders seemed to feel that somehow the Palestinians would be able to gain a state of their own without having to clearly recognise the right of a state called Israel to exist.

In the Israeli time zone, it was Dec. 8, 1987 — the day before the start of the Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the Israeli time zone, it was widely believed that the Palestinians would continue to acquiesce in the Israeli occupation, that the Reagan administration would support Israel to the hilt, and that the PLO could refrain from recognising Israel.

What the United States has done in opening talks with the PLO is let both parties know just what time it really is — time for Israel and the Palestinians to come to terms with each other openly and unambiguously.

"Israel has been jarred into reality," said Yaron Ezrahi, an Israeli political theorist close to the Labour Party, who teaches at the Hebrew University. "Our leaders were living in the most incredible and unrealistic universe, constructed entirely by their own hands."

"In this universe, American support was treated as though it were a divine right. Israel did not invest seriously in political initiatives vis-a-vis the Palestinians, it was indifferent to the changes in American public opinion. Now we are paying the price."

In the aftermath of the American-PLO dialogue, and Yasser Arafat's statement for the PLO recognising Israel's right to exist, Israelis now face a stark choice: either they continue to ignore the Palestinians' new approach and thereby run the risk of alienating the United States and a significant segment of American Jewry, or they face up to the idea that some type of Palestinian homeland has to be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The first indication of whether Israel is digesting the new realities could come early in the Bush administration, according to American Middle East experts, when the United States is expected to revive its longstanding proposal of using West Bank Palestinians as a way of opening an indirect Israeli-PLO negotiating process.

Such an arrangement would get the PLO into the diplomatic process but without requiring any more immediate concessions on its part. At the same time, it would get the Israelis to begin dealing with the Palestinians as a legitimate community, but without forcing them to face an immediate decision about negotiating with the PLO.

Sooner or later, however, Israeli politicians, who have lately been arguing over, "Who is a Jew?" are going to have to sit aside that debate and decide "who is an Israeli?" Is an Israeli one who believes that Israel must occupy the West Bank and Gaza Strip because the Jewish nationalist ideology, says so, or is an Israeli one who believes that Israel should base its borders on whatever lines and security arrangements will produce a stable peace with its Palestinian neighbours?

"We've come a long way in clarifying ourselves vis-a-vis the Israelis," said Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian professor at Bir Zeit University on the West Bank. "Now it is time for the Israelis to be equally clear about how they see us. The United States cannot let them avoid that question any longer."

Arafat has described Israel as a creation and extension of the United States — "America's spoiled baby." He felt it was not necessary to talk to the baby,

only to its parent. Anwar Sadat once had the same impression of the American-Israeli relationship.

The Egyptian president, during his first negotiations with Israel after the 1973 war, was fond of saying about Henry Kissinger and Israel's prime minister, Golda Meir: "This man is the only one who could tell this woman to leave my land, and she will do so."

Sadat eventually discovered that "this man" could only tell "this woman" so much, and that if Egypt hoped to get its land back, it would have to talk to Israel directly and in language that Israelis would find sincere.

That was the meaning of Sadat's trip to Israel in November 1977. State Department officials

say they intend to make it unambiguously clear to the PLO that the diplomatic train that Arafat has just hopped aboard does not stop in Washington: its destination is Israel.

"We will not deliver the Israelis for the PLO," a State Department Middle East expert said.

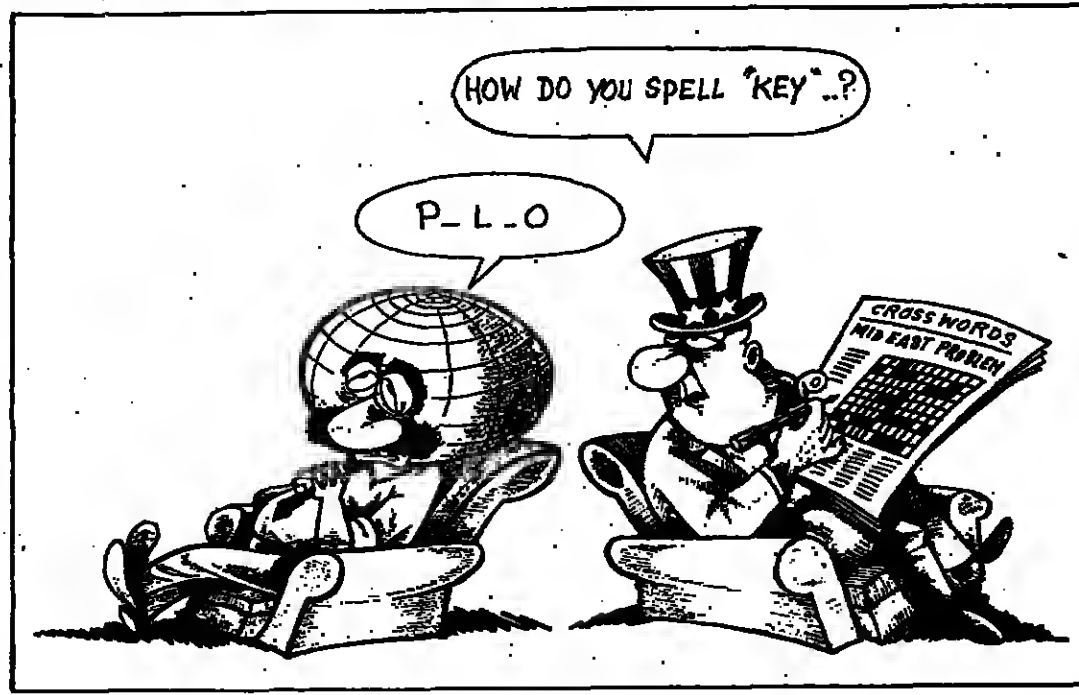
"This is the first time that the moderate lines has gotten real positive reinforcement from any American administration," said Rashid L. Khalidi, a Palestinian-American who is a professor of Middle East history at the University of Chicago.

"Now that it has, it just took all the wind out of the sails of the hard-liners."

But the new opportunities

offered by the dialogue could just as easily become dangers, if mishandled. The PLO could become so enamored with the idea of talking to the United States that it will not be able to resist the temptation of trying to drive a wedge between U.S. and Israel. This would only lead the American-PLO dialogue to a dead end and result in disillusionment and dashed expectations in the Arab World, Arab diplomats say.

As for the Israelis, they may find the hard choices set before them so overwhelming that they will dig in their heels and man the barricades, or, as some Arab diplomats fear, succumb to the temptation to draw the Palestinians into a violent confrontation that derails everything — The New York Times.



U.S. sanctions policy in Panama begins to backfire

By Katherine King
Reuter

PANAMA CITY — U.S. economic sanctions against Panama aimed at ousting military leader General Manuel Antonio Noriega are showing signs of backfiring, alienating U.S. friends while failing to achieve their goal.

Panama's Archbishop Marcos McGrath this week called the sanctions immoral, Panamanian employees of the Panama Canal blasted them as psychological warfare and U.S. businessmen are saying they will lobby against them in Washington.

Even ousted President Eric Arturo Delvalle, who was due to meet with President Reagan Thursday, is reported to be pushing Washington to at least partially lift the measures.

The sanctions were meant to force Noriega, a former U.S. ally, to step down by strangling the flow of money to his government and weakening the general's hold on power.

But Noriega, who has been indicted on drug smuggling charges in the United States, has consolidated his power and now even appears to be considering running as a candidate for president in May elections.

The sanctions, particularly a ban on tax payments to the government, have begun affecting U.S. interests.

This week, spokesmen for the 7,000 Panamanian employees of the Panama Canal said they would sue the U.S. government for damages if they lost property due to the sanctions.

The sanctions prevent taxes withheld from workers' salaries by the Canal Commission, a U.S. government agency, from being turned over to the Panamanian government as stipulated in the canal treaties.

Since the employees' taxes have not been paid, the Panamanian government has threatened to confiscate cars, furniture and even houses from the canal employees.

In a news conference, the employees accused Washington and Panama of using them as "instruments in a psychological war."

Dennis McAuliffe, Canal Commission administrator, said in an interview he was "very concerned" about Panamanian threats to confiscate property but admitted he did not see any quick change in the sanctions policy.

"The (Panamanian) government wants to turn the employees against us and that's beginning to happen," McAuliffe said.

"It's entirely possible that this

could eventually lead to some sort of job action," he said. As U.S. government employees the canal workers are not allowed to strike.

Even so, the effectiveness of the tax ban is doubtful. Yearly taxes from 16,000 Panamanian employees of the canal and the Defence Department amount to only about \$300 million.

NEWS ANALYSIS

In addition, private U.S. companies appear to have found legal loopholes in the sanctions. Several have begun paying employees their gross salaries, leaving them with the responsibility for paying their own taxes.

"Private sector taxes being

withheld from Panamanian employees of American companies would only amount to about \$4 million a year — if it was being withheld, but a lot of it isn't," one private economist said.

Nevertheless, the sanctions have battered Panama's economy. The government has stopped all internal and international debt payments and can barely meet its employee payroll.

"A White House spokesman this week said the sanctions were effective," tightening the money flow to the Noriega regime, causing his problems."

But as pressure increases, government officials say they are even more determined not to give in to U.S. demands.

"Yes, the economy is in a decline. We may soon be at the

level of Haiti, then even at the level of Biafra. But at least we will be free," Commerce Minister Mario Rognoni told Reuters in a recent interview.

Economists here say the decline could go on for months or years and still never reach the flashpoint Washington hoped would oust Noriega.

But despite all the pressure to do away with sanctions, Washington seems unlikely to do so.

In a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce here last week, U.S. Ambassador to Panama Arthur Davis praised U.S. businessmen for their "sacrifices" and said President-elect Bush "will not be any more inclined to let up the pressures for change."

Unconvinced, representatives of the U.S. business group are already planning a trip to Washington in January to lobby for the sanctions to be lifted.

A radar in need

THE FOLLOWING is a reply to Dr. Fahed Al Fanek's column entitled "A radar in question," signed by Civil Aviation Authority Director General Mahmoud Jamal Balqaz. It appeared in Al Rai Sunday Dec. 25.

In reply to Fahed Al Fanek's column, I would like to make the following facts clear:

— The geographic location of the (Aqaba) airport, which is in an area surrounded by countries that have their own airspace, requires strict control on the landing and take-off procedures to ensure that airplanes remain within the Kingdom's airspace.

— To prevent a midair collision between airplanes landing at Aqaba Airport and those taking off from other airports.

— The geographic surroundings of the airport is such that the airport is situated in a valley surrounded by high mountains from the east and the armistice lines from the west.

— This radar allows for a link between the radar traffic control centre at Queen Alia International Airport, covering Jordanian airspace completely since it is the best piece of equipment manufactured.

— This radar serves all airplanes landing at and taking off from Aqaba Airport, those passing through Jordanian airspace in the southern part of the Kingdom such as those going to and from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Yemen. It is also capable of dealing with all aircraft, in addition to those with loads of tourists, 24 hours a day and under all weather conditions.

— We do appreciate the writer's concern with priorities, but doesn't he see that air safety is a main priority and that an air accident will cause unmeasurable damages to the reputation of Jordan, and that such advanced technology is bound to reflect positively on the economy and reputation of Jordan. This will also encourage foreign airlines to use the airport, a matter which will increase landings, arrivals and transit traffic.

— Finally, we have to point out that the funding for that project came in the form of a grant from the U.S. and that Jordan has no financial obligations (towards that).

Bonn caught between NATO needs and anti-military groundswell

By Mark Heinrich
Reuter

BONN — "That was our life," murmured Gerda Suetel, 53, staring at the rubble of her home demolished by the latest of 22 NATO jet crashes in West Germany this year.

Her bitterness, when she came home to find her house and neighbourhood in the town of Remscheid devastated by the crash on Dec. 8, evoked the growing public indignation over West Germany's heavy military burden.

Many West Germans see no more point to NATO troops ripping up the land or jets screaming over rooftops to practise for war when East-West strains are easing and the Soviet Union is preparing unilateral troop cuts.

"The German public is increasingly feeling more threatened by these manoeuvres than from outside," said opposition Social Democratic leader Hans-Jochen Vogel. "There's just no longer any reason to train as if we stood on the verge of war."

The combination of the East-West thaw and the rash of NATO aircraft accidents in this densely populated country on the West's front line has fanned anti-military feeling to a degree worrisome for Bonn's allies, analysts say.

A recent survey for the Defence Ministry detected public support for military spending at its lowest point since the early 1960s.

Seventy per cent of West Germans in a poll released on Dec. 22 wanted NATO troop cutbacks in response to Soviet initiative in neighbouring Eastern Europe.

Manoeuvres suspended

Hours after the Remscheid disaster, which killed six people and injured dozens, the Defence Ministry suspended West German Air Force manoeuvres until Jan. 2 to contain public outcry. U.S., British and Canadian forces followed suit days later.

The United States and Britain, however, were perturbed at the Defence Ministry's hurried action and joined it mainly as a gesture of allied solidarity. At the same time, they said the

suspension would harm the defence readiness of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

But analysts say NATO's forward-defence concerns will have to bend before a growing chorus from West German citizens since Remscheid for curbs on alliance activity, above all low-altitude training manoeuvres.

"We've had a longstanding debate on NATO's flying practices. But this year civilian lives were taken in accidents for the first time," Gebhard Schweigler, foreign affairs analyst at a think tank near Munich, said in an interview.

"Bonn is now clearly under pressure to do something to cut the large number of low-level flights. They cannot be repudiated but a reasonable compromise will have to be found."

On Dec. 15, Chancellor Helmut Kohl promised anxious premiers of West Germany's 11 states he would seek a reduction of NATO low-altitude flights, those under 455 metres, to "an absolutely necessary minimum." A joint federal-state commis-

sion would be formed to consider where significant cuts could be made.

Although West Germany already ranks last in NATO in hours of low-level manoeuvres flown, one post-Remscheid poll found 89 per cent of Germans favouring an outright ban on such training.

About 87,000 low-level flights — exercises below radar-detection altitude — are conducted annually, 55,000 of them by U.S., British, Canadian, French, Dutch and Belgian air force units based in West Germany.

A disaster at Ramstein air show in August which killed 70 people, although unrelated to low-level flying, still led to slight reductions in such exercises in response to the growing public clamour over all NATO exercises.

Eighty-eight per cent in a recent survey felt the West German government should also have an authoritative say on the number of sorties flown by NATO partners.

But Bonn cannot control manoeuvres of major allies, under

terms of the 1955 treaty by which it joined NATO, dominated at the time by countries whose armies had occupied defeated Germany at the close of World War II.

Price to enter into NATO

"At that time (of cold war) it was clear a continued presence of U.S., British and French forces was desirable but we couldn't have this without a certain price," said Wilhelm Grewe, a senior Foreign Ministry aide in the 1950s who helped negotiate Bonn's entry into NATO.

Kohl's government, left with no tool but time-consuming persuasion to limit its allies' activities, now intends to lower the profile of its own 495,000-strong military — the biggest European force in NATO.

On Nov. 30, Bonn said it would cut the size and scope of its field manoeuvres by more than half to minimise damage to citizens' property and the environment. NATO partners were urged to do the same.

But Bonn's move surprised U.S. and British officials.

"There are misgivings among the allies about the Germans' declining willingness to stand up and fight if needed," said Schweigler. "NATO can only defend if properly trained."

Young West German men are avoiding the draft in record numbers, another worry for NATO planners. More than 70,000 opted for alternative community service this year.

To counter allied doubts, Kohl called this month for a joint government-military campaign to bolster public faith in NATO. He warned Bonn would not let consciousness of the threat from the East slip.

"I think we're in a very difficult psychological situation," Admiral Dieter Wellershoff, head of the West German Armed Forces, told a major Sunday newspaper this month.

"NATO's successful record has led to a situation in which people increasingly believe the alliance is no longer necessary," he said. "The better our security policy, the harder it is for us to justify that we must stay alert. That's a real dilemma."

Science in 1988: Looking into superconductivity, AIDS, physical properties

By Jim Heintz
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Scientists in 1988 scored some important victories in their fight against disease, disorder and ignorance, but they still couldn't penetrate some major mysteries.

Among the goals they sought — and possibly came closer to — was a cure for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. They also sought a substance that would be superconductive at room temperature and the so-called "grand unified theory" which would explain all the properties of the physical world.

Although such research requires knowledge and mental agility far beyond the median level, one scientist in 1988 acquired a surprising degree of celebrity by trying to make it understandable to everyone. Stephen Hawking, a British theoretical physicist, wrote a witty book, attempting to explain outer theories of time and space in layman's terms. "A Brief History of Time" became a best-seller. Broad scientific knowledge didn't reach everyone, however. At the dark end of the spectrum, a poll in the United States found that one in five adults still believes he sun orbits the earth, rather than the other way around. Only one out of three knew that lasers are beams of light rather than of sound.

The year's Nobel prizes for science went to five Americans, three West Germans and a Briton.

The medicine prize was won by Sir James W. Black of London's King's College and Americans Jerrard E. Elion and George Hitchings for their work in developing drugs to fight herpes, leukemia, malaria and other diseases.

The West Germans who won the chemistry prize — Johann Deisenhofer, Robert Huber and Hartmut Michel — were recognized for experiments regarded as essential steps toward photosynthesis. Americans Leon Lederman, Melvin Schwartz and Jack Steinberger won the physics prize for capturing neutrinos in a high-energy beam to probe subatomic structures.

AIDS persist

No cure was found for AIDS, the baffling disease that destroys body's ability to fight infection. At many scientists were heartened by a development that may make finding a cure much easier. Doctors at several California institutions successfully transplanted the human immune system into mice, an important accomplishment because mice are in stand-ins for humans in immunity experiments. The ability to transplant the immune system will let researchers more rapidly develop new drugs and vaccines, including approximately 50 experimental anti-AIDS drugs under development.

Superconductors

There was a modest but significant leap toward the goal of developing practical superconductors. Researchers for IBM announced they had discovered a material that would conduct electricity with no loss from resistance at minus 234 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 148 Celsius). Its temperature is well above the temperature of liquid nitrogen, meaning that nitrogen, a relatively cheap and abundant substance, could be used as a coolant in equipment using superconductivity.

Superconductors are perceived being eventually useful for tremendously small and powerful computers, super-efficient power transmission lines and trains that travel over a magnetic field rather than steel rails.

The speed of advances in superconductivity research was an issue at the heart of a controversy over whether the United States could actually build a remarkable scientific device for which the government has found a site, it not the funds: The superconducting super collider.

Grand theory

The SSC is designed as 53-mile-long tunnel in which atomic

particles would be coaxed up to nearly the speed of light, then smashed into each other. By pulverizing these particles into even tinier bits, scientists hope to unravel essential mysteries of physics, including the "grand unified theory."

Supporters say the gargantuan device is necessary for scientific advancement. Opponents argue that the superconductors used in the device might be outdated by the time the SSC is completed because of rapid advancement in the field. Others say that with a minimum price tag of \$4.4 billion, the project would be little more than a huge giveaway to science and industry in the guise of scientific progress. They also contend that a facility at the European laboratory for particle physics in Geneva, Switzerland, could be modified to do the job.

Space

Space programmes also are expensive, but were much more happily received in 1988. The French continued their string of successful launches of payload-bearing Ariane rockets. The Soviet Union, after years of deciding the U.S. space shuttle programme, launched a shuttle of its own. The Buran (snowstorm) made an unmanned flight and the Soviets said they wouldn't send humans up on a shuttle until they had assured themselves the craft wouldn't explode, as the U.S.

space shuttle Challenger did in 1986.

Shaking off two years of trauma after that explosion, the United States launched two successful shuttle missions in 1988. Meanwhile, China readied a rocket to launch from a remote site in Sichuan province, possibly as early as next year.

If space travel advances to the point of being able to send men beyond the solar system, will there be anyone to greet them? Canadian and U.S. scientists say it's looking more probable. Canadian and U.S. astronomers said their analyses of light from distant stars indicates these stars are orbited by planet-like bodies and that some of the planets might have earth-like conditions conducive to the development of more-or-less familiar life forms.

To find out for sure, they'll have to travel at least 90 light years (540 trillion miles or 860 trillion kilometres).

The age-old problem of paralysis found some relief through Roger Natan, an engineer at Israel's Ben-Gurion University. He has developed a system restoring some movement for quadriplegics by hooking electrodes that stimulate their muscles to a computer that takes spoken commands — thus the paralysed can tell their muscles what to do.

Collision

Despite its capacity for good,



The space age

science sometimes collides with religious faith. In 1988, the most notable example may have been researchers in Britain, Switzerland and the United States concluded experiments which proved, they said, that the shroud of Turin could not have been Jesus Christ's burial cloth. The shroud, kept as a religious relic in Turin, Italy, shows the image of a man who appears to have been crucified. The Archbishop of Turin said he accepted the conclusion, but Vatican radio said "the matter is not closed."

Hawking, the Oxford physicist and his colleague, Roger Penrose, were the subject of protests when Israel awarded them a Wolf science prize. Some orthodox legislators claimed their conclusions on how the universe was formed conflict with the Biblical account.

Computers, once regarded with the same exotic fascination as space travel, have lately become commonplace. But they haven't lost their capacity to surprise and beguile, as two incidents showed.

Viruses everywhere

In the first, a "computer virus" appeared one day in some of the United States' most sophisticated computer networks. A virus is a programme that when run into a computer sets about reproducing itself so busily that it monopolises the computer's capacity to work and overloads its memory. The virus was blamed on a graduate student who made one tiny error in devising a programme, but the glitch demonstrated the extreme

vulnerability of computers upon which so many depend.

The other incident bespoke the spirit of inquisitiveness — even playfulness — that often is at the heart of science. Computer operators in the United States, Europe and Australia cooperated in a project to find the prime factors of a 100-digit number. While such a feat is not out of reach of "supercomputers," it would take one machine about 10 months of constant computing.

Instead, the researchers divided the project into pieces to be handled by about 400 different computers during times when they otherwise would have been idle. Doing so took just 26 days and startled security experts and cryptographers, who had based some of their systems on the assumption that such computing was crippling time-consuming.

Italian women, getting ahead, say men must catch up

By Frances D'Emilio
The Associated Press

ROME — From police forces to television to business, Italian women are becoming more prominent in many fields that once were the strict province of men.

Women drivers now manoeuvre Rome's orange-coloured buses through bumper-to-bumper traffic, which is directed more and more frequently by women traffic officers. Policewomen in high heels wave automatic rifles out the windows of squad cars as they escort ministers and dignitaries visiting the capital. Until 1981, women in the national police force were assigned only to cases involving prostitution or children.

An increasing number of women are anchoring Italy's prime-time newscasts, and there's a popular television spoof of this trend written, acted and directed by women.

"When you feel secure, you can poke fun at yourself," says Serena Dandini, one of the three authors of the new weekly show, *Tivu delle Ragazze* (the girls' television).

Italy's ultimate bastion for men — Sunday afternoon soccer — also has a new, feminine accent. A woman has joined the ranks of Italian radio's play-by-play commentators of the games, which are not televised live.

When Italy's first woman on the supreme court was named in September, she was asked what it meant to enter a world reserved until then for men.

"It signifies that women are present, that they're doing their job," said Maria Gabriella Lucifora, the new high court judge. She began her judicial career in 1963, when Italian law first permitted women to be magistrates. "It's only a question of time" before more and more women capture top positions, says Marisa Occhionero, a Rome University sociologist who has done studies for the government on the future of women.

"Professors at universities... engineers, businesswomen, architects... They're not content to stay in civil service jobs," says Occhionero.

Women change, men don't

"The (Italian) woman is changing. She has changed. It's the man who hasn't changed," she adds.

Echoing her comment were several women in fields ranging from politics to banking who complained in interviews that while they have made tremendous gains in the work

world, they've had much less success in convincing men to help take care of house and children.

A recent survey of households in 10 large Italian cities in which both spouses worked full-time found that men put in an average of three to five hours doing work around the house, including repairs and cleaning the car, while women did 33-35 hours of housework.

Says Carole Beebe Tarantelli, an American who is a member of the Italian parliament, changing sex roles are hard to swallow when you're an Italian man. "Whose mother would respond to 'every woman'?" Mrs. Tarantelli's husband was an Italian economist slain by Red Brigades terrorists.

Newly married Italian men are often dismayed to find that their wives, working or not, won't iron their underwear like their mothers did.

"Women in Italy have all the problems, of, say, an American woman, in struggling for a place outside home," says Occhionero, who worked for some time in the United States. "But the Italian woman's (struggle) is especially hard" because of the importance placed on the family and the idea that the mother is the pillar of the family.

Chores of a sacred institution

Despite the family's place in Italy as a virtually sacred institution, the way Italian society is set up often makes it difficult to run one, especially by working mothers.

Mrs. Tarantelli, a mother, notes that public schools don't have team sports or other extracurricular activities. That means babysitters for children who finish classes at 1 p.m., five or six hours before parents finish work.

Stores shut down for three hours for lunch and only a very few are open past 8 p.m. In the Tuscan hilltown of Arezzo, factory workers' complaints that the only day care centre shut down before the factory closed prompted the town to open up a second facility to accommodate them.

The difficulties in raising children in Italy have been linked to a birth rate that is the lowest in the world — an average 1.27 children per family earlier this year.

Gioia Longo, a cultural anthropologist who founded a hotline for women abused by their husbands, says judging by a survey she did of 700 teen-agers in a small, Adriatic resort town, the young women of the next decade don't see any limits to their achievements, but the boys are confused about their changing roles.

Stereotypical Latin males, says sociologist Occhionero, "are afraid of these women. They want to protect them but don't understand to what point (and) they are threatened."

Stefania Zappanico, a journalist in her 20s, says many women don't help their cause.

"Italian women are still different from Northern European or

American women. They're not mentally independent. Even women who work think they have to depend on men. They don't value independence that much in itself," says Zappanico, who has spent time in both London and the United States.

As part of a nationwide survey about women during the 1870s, the first years of a unified Italy, a top official in Bari reported that "an ass, an ox, a sheep are always worth more than a wife to the peasant, and the wife obeys her husband like a slave."

Up to 1969, a simple trust could get a wife convicted of adultery but a husband could only be prosecuted if he brought his lover to live in the same house as his wife. A 1969 supreme court decision led to the abolishment of adultery as a crime for either sex.

Birth control pills were illegal until the early 1970s; abortion was legalised in 1978. Until 1984, if an Italian man married a foreigner, the children would automatically have Italian citizenship,

How to boil an egg — the official Swiss method

By Richard Murphy
Reuters

ZURICH — Switzerland is renowned for its top-class chefs and catering schools, but that has not stopped civil servants from offering their countrymen some very basic cooking tips.

"Put the eggs in one cm (half an inch) of cold water in a saucepan with a tight-fitting lid. Bring to the boil, switch off the heat immediately and let the eggs continue to boil for the desired time. Et voilà."

This lesson in how to boil eggs the government-approved way comes from the federal energy department in Bern.

It is part of a new campaign, codenamed "Bravo," urging the Swiss to be sparing with energy in the kitchen and at work.

Newspaper and television advertisements suggest energy-saving ways of cooking eggs, meat and vegetables and recommend the use of pressure-cookers and micro-wave ovens.

Energy Minister Adolf Ogi said the focus on such mundane activities is intended to show how ordinary people can help to reduce Switzerland's 15 billion Swiss franc (\$10.3 billion) annual electricity bill.

"This campaign says 'Bravo' to people who are doing it right," Ogi told reporters. "There is nothing of the schoolmaster or the

wagging finger of the state."

Turning off the heat as soon as the water reaches boiling point will still produce the perfect boiled eggs, the energy department says. Indeed, there is less risk that eggs will crack while jumping around in the saucepan.

The department reckons that its technique uses only half the energy and one fifth of the water of more traditional methods.

"If every Swiss household has boiled eggs once a week, this could lead to a saving of 12 million kilowatt hours (of electricity) per year," it says — enough to supply a town of 3,000 people with electricity for a year.

Behind the fairly light-hearted campaign lies a serious purpose. Switzerland faces some difficult decisions about its energy policy for the 1990s.

In the past decade energy consumption has risen by an average of two per cent per year — too fast, says the government.

Both hydro-electric and nuclear power, which between them produce virtually all of the country's electricity, are coming under fire from environmentalists.

Their campaign has forced a national referendum, to be held within the next few years, on whether the five existing nuclear power stations which supply around 37 per cent of Swiss electricity should be scrapped.

The search is therefore on both for alternative sources of energy and ways of curbing consumption.

Finance Minister Otto Stich is not convinced that campaign Bravo in itself offers a recipe for success. He believes the Swiss appetite for saving must be whetted by more direct means, such as a tax on energy consumption.

"Appeals to save energy are not enough," he said in a speech this month. "A comprehensive energy tax would send a signal to the consumer in industry and at home to change his behaviour and would provide a lasting incentive to save."

Stich's proposals were circulated for discussion this month but they will take years to wind their way through Switzerland's tortuous consultation and legislative process.

In the meantime, the government hopes Switzerland's 6.5 million people will extend their concept of good citizenship into the kitchen.

"Saving energy doesn't mean giving up warmth, mobility or power," said Eduard Kiener of the federal energy office. "It means giving up waste."

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Economic review of 1988

Rich nations maintain prosperity while poor states remain poor

LONDON (R) — It was the year when there wasn't a slump after all. Wealthy nations in 1988 continued their longest peacetime economic expansion on record in spite of the trauma of the "Black Monday" Oct. 19, 1987 financial crash. But it was not enough of a boom to drag the Third World, laden with \$1.3 trillion of debt, out of its misery.

UNICEF

At year's end the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) smote the Christmasede consciences of the affluent by reporting that about 25 children in Africa, Asia and Latin America die each minute from hunger and from illnesses that could mostly be cured with just a few cents' worth of drugs.

UNICEF said that to open the way to a truly global expansion "will require vision and leadership of an unusually high order."

Yet 1988 was also a year when anxiety again broke surface over how the quest for prosperity may threaten life itself.

Pollution

Pollution horror stories bounded. Only one-in-five city dwellers were said by another U.N. agency to be breathing clean air.

Scientists said a savage U.S. summer drought was the kind of phenomenon that might happen often in the future because of the "greenhouse effect" — a likely atmospheric warming as mankind's addition to burning petroleum and coal releases toxic gases.

Such leaders as the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose nations are branded as major polluters by ecologists, alluded in keynote speeches to the dangers of industrial and farm pollution.

"In a number of regions the state of the environment is simply frightening... time is running out," Gorbachev told the U.N. General Assembly. Weapons, he said, devoured money that might otherwise pay for pollution-free economic advance.

At home Gorbachev had meanwhile faced complaint in the streets about why his "perestroika" economic restructuring was taking so long to put more food into Soviet larders.

China

Elsewhere in the communist world, China's effort to galvanise its economy by exposing it to Western-style market incentives created a new breed of socialist millionaires.

China also suffered annual inflation of 26 per cent in the year to the end of October.

Industrial world

Inflation again worried the United States and others in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — the "club" of 24 affluent non-communist industrial countries.

OECD economists in Paris gave the group an upbeat end-year report, seeing its 1988 economic expansion averaging four per cent and a fairly brisk 3.25 per cent for 1989.

But it would still have 29 million jobless. And inflation was rising, as consumers spent more money and a tighter market for skills pushed up wages. That may call for yet higher interest rates to brake the boom, turning the screw on debtor nations.

U.S. and Japan

The OECD saw a fairly big risk of higher inflation in the United States.

And it was worried by the huge \$150 billion annual budget deficits which President Reagan's policy of tax cuts coupled with high defence spending will leave to George Bush when he takes office Jan. 20.

The United States, owing more than any other nation, was in 1988 still running up debt by almost half a billion dollars a day. Interest payments on its borrowings from Japan (now the biggest creditor) and others meant that it would continue to run a big deficit on its current account, still up above \$100 billion in 1990, the OECD said.

That might unsettle investors and send "hot money" out of the dollar again to create a new round of financial instability.

The dollar, in which most of the world does business, began 1988 at all-time lows against the Deutschmark and Japan's surging yen but it then held above those values.

The end of the eight Reagan years meanwhile seemed likely to see Japan flex its muscle as a financial superpower and demand that the U.S. give it more say in managing the global economy.

It put up new ideas on debt at a Toronto economic summit in June and is likely, Tokyo officials say, to replace the U.S. in 1989 as the biggest aid donor. Per capita gross domestic product already exceeds that of the United States.

Summit-watchers at the Toronto

to Group of Seven (G-7) meeting also saw signs of the leading powers forming up into three blocs — the United States plus Canada, Japan with a role to speak for some other Asian states and, third, the European Community (EC).

South Korea

But Asia's fast-industrialising "little dragons" such as South Korea also demanded a bigger say. Receipts from booming exports promised to turn South Korea, the fourth highest debtor in 1986, into a net creditor in coming months.

European Community

The EC made progress in 1988 towards a goal of abolishing internal trade barriers by end-1992 to become a true common market of 320 million people. And it promised the rest of the world it did not want to be a protectionist "fortress Europe."

But squabbles lay ahead. It moves next to working out how much sovereignty over monetary policy the 12 members must surrender. Britain's Margaret Thatcher said "no" to a European central bank let alone any kind of United States of Europe.

Latin America

In other regions of the globe, Latin American leaders at year's end sought a summit with the West on what they saw as a socio-economic crisis over their debt which may threaten their region's fledgling democracies.

A U.N. report said Latin America's average inflation rate doubled in 1988 to 470 per cent. Output barely rose. About 85 per cent of its trade surplus went on servicing its \$420 billion of debt, most owed to U.S. and other Western banks.

And higher interest rates levied by Western nations to check their own inflation meant a spectacular rise in the net transfer of wealth out of Latin America, to \$28.9 billion, which was \$12 billion more than in 1987.

Middle East

Middle East economies may be helped by firmer oil prices if a new OPEC agreement to curb

excess output from Jan. 1 can be made to stick. But the OECD doubted if oil prices would rise much — a boon for consuming nations.

India

Elsewhere, while dry weather scorched the U.S. farm belt, the 800 million people of India got a break when excellent monsoon rains broke their country's worst drought of the century.

"The economy will march forward," said Bombay stock exchange president G.B. Desai. "Following good crops, demand for all goods is picking up."

Sub-Saharan Africa

Rains also ended several parched years in sub-Saharan Africa to bring some relief to that impoverished region of more than 300 million inhabitants. The spectre of another famine withdrew from Ethiopia, although thousands died of hunger and disease in Sudan where there is a civil war.

Adebayo Adedeji, executive secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, thinks the area's economy expanded in 1988 by up to 2.5 per cent after only 0.8 per cent in 1987.

But he said: "While any improvement is better than nothing at all, it is like scratching the surface."

Although the West found no new remedy for Latin America's debt, it did offer some relief on the debt owed to Western governments by sub-Saharan Africa. Creditors will make write-offs or extend repayment or offer easier terms.

Officials estimated the cost to taxpayers in creditor countries at around half a billion dollars a year.

It wasn't much in terms of the sort of money washing around in the Western economies.

Biggest corporate takeover

RJR Nabisco Inc., a U.S. food and tobacco conglomerate, sold itself in 1988 to takeover specialists Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co. of New York for almost \$25 billion.

Largely financed by bank loans, it was the biggest corporate takeover in history.

Reebok tops list of most profitable U.S. companies

NEW YORK (AP) — Athletic apparel manufacturer Reebok International has remained first among the most profitable companies in the United States, Forbes magazine said.

Reebok, known for its popular leather athletic footwear, had a more than 200 per cent average return on equity during the last four years, with a 27.7 per cent return over the past 12 months, Forbes said Monday. The magazine compiles an annual listing of the nation's most profitable companies.

The business magazine tallied firms' return on equity — the measure on how much a corporation earns on its shareholders' investments — over the last three to five years. Forbes listed 1,116 companies in its rankings, which are being published in the magazine's Jan. 9 issue.

Right behind the Canton, Massachusetts-based Reebok was Delta Woodside Industries, a Greenville, South Carolina-based fabric and apparel maker, with a more than 200 per cent return on equity over the past three years.

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Israel devalues shekel by 5%

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel's central bank Tuesday announced five per cent devaluation of the shekel to stem a wave of panic buying of U.S. dollars and other foreign currencies.

There have been rumours for weeks that the shekel would be devalued by as much as 15 per cent, causing widespread buying of foreign currencies by people hoping to sell later at a better rate.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange halted trading early Tuesday to give the markets time to adjust to the announcement, Israel army radio said.

Bank of Israel spokesman Gideon Schurr said the devaluation meant the U.S. dollar would now buy 1.68 shekels, compared with 1.59 at the previous rate fixed by the government. The Bank of Israel is the Israeli central bank.

Schurr said the bank's move was "in response to renewed purchases of foreign currency by the public in recent days, which were particularly high today."

He declined to give figures, but Israel radio said Israelis have been buying as much as \$70 million a day in foreign currencies this week.

The run on foreign currencies was an effort by the public to make money by buying now at a lower shekel rate in anticipation of selling the currency at a higher shekel rate after devaluation.

A devaluation was not anticipated until after the first of the year. Economists said further devaluations still were likely, in part to stimulate flagging exports.

Industries have been calling for a devaluation to ease a squeeze on profits caused by rising production costs and static income from sales abroad. The last devaluation was 10 per cent against the dollar in January 1987.

Shimoon Peres, finance minister in the new government formed last week, has said devaluation would not help the economy unless government spending also was cut.

Peres is preparing a package of wage restraints, budget cuts and a devaluation to try to revive Israel's faltering economy, an aide said Monday.

Peres began intensive negotiations with trade union leaders, industrialists and treasury officials at the weekend on a programme to be announced in early January, the aide said.

The economy is suffering the most serious slowdown in three years with gross domestic product growing at a mere one per cent in 1988 and industrial production in decline.

Bank of Israel Governor Michael Bruno called in a speech Sunday for cuts of one billion shekels (\$625 million) to balance the state budget, a reduction in taxes and a drastic reform of the inflation-indexing system to lower real wages.

Bruno has also recommended privately that the government devalue the shekel by 15 per cent against the dollar to restore export profitability eroded by inflation since the last devaluation.

Treasury sources said Peres was seeking cuts of up to 500 million shekels (\$310 million) in export and food subsidies.

He also sought a 200 million shekel (\$125 million) cut in defence spending, despite the extra cost of fighting a Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, they said.

Defence accounts for 8.2 billion shekels (\$5.1 billion) out of a 47.8 billion shekel (\$29.9 billion) budget for 1988-89.

Peres, leader of the Labour Party, faces problems in persuading the Histadrut labour federation allied to his party to accept real wage reductions and a cut in food subsidies.

Bruno said Israel should bring inflation down rapidly to European levels of low single figures. Consumer prices are expected to rise by more than 17 per cent in 1988, a slight increase on last year.

Dozens of Western firms sign up to form joint ventures with Soviets

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — Dozens of Western firms have quickly teamed up with Soviet enterprises to take advantage of new rules allowing joint ventures as part of Moscow's perestroika push.

The new partnerships, many still in the planning stages, may eventually offer Soviets a variety and quantity of goods and services not readily available in their underdeveloped economy.

They also may give Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev some of the Western technology, know-how, money and management expertise sorely needed in his perestroika programme, the drive to restructure the lumbering economy to make it more efficient.

"The Soviets have much more to gain from this generally than Western partners," said Jan Vanous, research director of Planecon, a Washington-based firm specialising in forecasting economic trends in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

"They need to improve their economy on the domestic side, and one instrument of course would be to improve foreign economic relations," said an official of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. He demanded anonymity.

Vladimir Kamensky, head of the Soviet State Foreign Economic Commission, recently said 159 joint ventures with foreign partners have been registered. Analysts said this likely includes some arrangements with East European countries as well.

Some of the reported deals are: — West German electrical giant Siemens has proposed a \$560 million joint venture to build an atomic power reactor. A German tavern owner wants to open a pub in Leningrad.

— The British joint venture Rank Xerox plans to team up

with the Soviet state publishing group FTO Vneshtorgizdat for a photocopying shop in Moscow. The deal is worth less than \$1.8 million.

— A consortium led by Japan's Mitsubishi Corp. has agreed to conduct feasibility studies on a proposed \$5 billion chemical project in Western Siberia. The project would involve building 15 chemical plants. Another Japanese company, Raduga, is interested in sports and health centres.

— Spain's Telefonica De Espana will make telephones with the Soviet Ministry for Production of Communication media at a factory in the Ural mountains.

Another Spanish firm, Kelme, has joined with the Soviet State Committee for Sports to turn out sports shoes in Leningrad, Kiev and outside Moscow.

— In Italy, Eni Nazionale Idrocarburi's Enichem is considering two petrochemical joint ventures, including a \$6 billion project with Occidental Petroleum and two other international partners.

The Italian clothing chain Stefanel wants to open two shops in Leningrad. And the agricultural concern Ferruzzi has agreed to build an agro-industrial prototype on 1.2 million acres (486,000 hectares) of Ukrainian farmland.

The company's role could range from providing seed and fertiliser to roads and processing plants. Chairman Raul Gardini expects crops worth \$1.5 billion annually.

— Finnair, the Finnish airline, has signed up with the Soviet tourist agency Inturist on a hotel project for foreign visitors. Ireland's Aer Rianta wants to work with the Soviet airliner Aeroflot on an airport duty-free shop.

— The Indian Tourist Development Corp. has shown interest in opening a restaurant in

Moscow.

There's no indication how many of the partnerships have actually begun operations, but analysts believe the number is small and their investments are limited.

According to reports cited by analysts, about 500 million roubles — roughly \$830 million — has been committed in capital by both Soviet and foreign partners. An estimated one-third of the total has been put up by the West.

Ralph Land, a general manager of Britain's Rank Xerox, said negotiations to open the photocopying shop in Moscow were lengthy.

"We didn't always speak the same language," he said. "I'm not talking about English and Russian. Our concept of profitability, our concept of cash flow, our concept of depreciation were different."

Dutch electronics giant Philips has no plans to follow others' lead.

"Joint ventures are like marriages — you got to know each other very well before you plunge into it," said spokesman Jan Van Schagen. "Right now, Philips and the Soviet Union aren't even engaged."

The Soviet Union issued a decree on Jan. 13, 1987 — and legislation was approved months later — permitting the formation of joint ventures with foreign partners.

Only about two dozen were registered in 1987, but the campaign picked up in 1988.

Indeed, Vanous said some Western exporters have been encouraged to set up the operations as part of continuing their business with Moscow.

But Western companies also have been lured by a potential

market of 280 million consumers.

Donald Kendall, chairman of PepsiCo's executive committee, said the Soviets are "looking for companies to come there in their own self-interest that are interested in making a profit, which certainly we are."

The analysts suggested the partnership push has been prompted by the Soviet's desire to boost consumers' living standards, expand export capacity with more competitive goods and gain access to Western technology, know-how and management skills.

According to these analysts, the Soviets also want to limit imports from the West that require them to make payments in scarce hard currency, such as dollars. The Soviet currency, the rouble, is virtually worthless outside the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union recently sought to ease restrictions on these arrangements by scrapping the limit on foreigners' share of a joint venture and allowing a foreigner to head the operation.

Hiring and firing rules have been simplified. Tax breaks have been offered to manufacturers willing to put up factories for consumer goods, medicine, trucks and high technology, as well as to joint ventures operating in the Soviet Far East.

Even so, Western companies still face difficulties.

They cannot convert profits made in roubles into dollars or other hard currencies and take them out of the country, analysts said. The Soviet economy cannot provide an adequate and reliable supply of goods that companies need in their operations. And, Westerners must deal with an entrenched Soviet bureaucracy that can slow business ventures.

Indonesia opens major ventures

JAKARTA (AP) — Indonesia opened the door to new stock markets, leasing companies and insurance firms in an effort to mobilise public funds and create new financing sources to support production.

The new policy, contained in presidential and ministerial decrees, allows the private sector to open new securities exchanges that would operate side-by-side with the stock market organised by the government. Organisers of the new exchanges must be all Indonesians.

Exchanges may be opened in cities other than Jakarta, and company shares may be listed on both private exchanges and the existing Jakarta Stock Exchange.

The regulations ban "insider trading" based on confidential information about the companies issuing stock.

The government also opened the way to formation of leasing companies, either by Indonesians or by joint ventures owned at least 15 per cent by Indonesians.

It simplified procedures for establishing insurance companies, and specified that joint ventures in this field must be at least 20 per cent Indonesian-owned.

Mexicans limit foreign borrowing

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Congress has authorised the government to borrow up to \$10.5 billion from foreign creditors next year, but opposition legislators forced an agreement that any additional amount must have congressional approval.

The chamber of deputies approved by 383-5 a bill authorising the credit limit after a walkout by virtually all 240 opposition legislators forced the 500-seat house to suspend the session for seven hours for lack of a quorum.

Opposition legislators had protested because they claimed Mexico's foreign debt of \$106 billion was already too big and the burden of repayment was too heavy.

Others from the conservative National Action Party were also protesting a new two per cent tax President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration had slapped on corporate assets in an effort to narrow the nation's huge budget deficit.

The Salinas administration had initially requested permission to borrow only up to \$7 billion abroad, but included language that authorised further borrowing if the government thought it necessary.

Legislators objected that violated a constitutional provision requiring congressional authorisation for all government borrowing.

The government dropped the open borrowing provision but raised the authorisation figure to \$10.5 billion as a precaution against any fall in the price of crude oil, Mexico's top source of export revenue.

The final \$3.5 billion would be sought only if oil prices dropped, international interest rates rose or foreign creditors rejected Mexico's efforts to renegotiate service payments on the debt.

Salinas has said he wants negotiate a reduction in debt payments with creditor banks, most of them in the United States, and get new loans to revive Mexico's stagnant economy. Mexico's debt is the second highest among developing nations after Brazil's.

Treasury Minister Pedro Aspe told the Mexican congress last week that he hopes to persuade foreign creditors to reduce debt payments from the current five per cent of the gross national product to about three per cent.

Mexico's debt payments amounted to about \$14 billion in 1988.

Japan, Iran suspend talks on project

TOKYO (AP) — Japan and Iran have suspended talks without reaching agreement on continuing construction of a multibillion-dollar petrochemical complex damaged in the Iran-Iraq war.

A Mitsui and Co. official, who spoke on condition he not be identified, said the talks would be

resumed in late January or early February.

In discussions in Tokyo since Dec. 8, M.H. Rahbary, deputy managing director of National Petrochemical Co. of Iran (NPC), asked for a resumption of construction, the official said.

The project was 85 per cent complete when construction was

suspended in October 1984 following attacks on the facility by Iraqi war planes.

The Japanese side, led by Mitsui, told Rahbary that war damage to the complex raised serious cost and safety problems for summing construction, the official added.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

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	Buy	Sell	French franc	78.6	78
U.S. dollar	475.0	477.0	Japanese yen (for 100)	380.7	380
Pound Sterling	857.2	861.5	Dutch guilder	237.2	238
Deutschemark	268.4	269.7	Swedish crown	77.4	77
Swiss franc	317.9	319.3	Italian Lira (for 100)	36.4	36
			Belgian franc (for 100)	127.6	128

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Once again, he was invited to camp by Philadelphia, where Lynam had succeeded Matt Guokas as head coach.

ZAGREB (R) — Basketball centre Stojko Vrankovic has turned down the chance to become the first Yugoslav to play in the American NBA and signed instead a three-year, \$750,000 contract with Real Madrid. He will team up in Spain with his friend Drazen Petrovic, one of the sport's superstars who used to play for Cibona Zagreb and cost Real \$2.5 million. Vrankovic, 23, told Reuters Tuesday: "I had very serious contacts with National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics and almost signed the contract. But then came the Real offer and I accepted." He added: "Drazen told me Real needed a centre and that he had suggested to them I would fit perfectly." Petrovic joined Real after the Seoul Olympics where the Yugoslavs won the silver medal. Vrankovic said: "Boston Celtics offered me only \$200,000 for the first year and maybe more in future. The people from Real came in with a more solid offer. They promised money, a big flat and a Porsche, so it was easy to decide."

Mandlikova, currently ranked 29th in the world, has not played competitively for almost six months after suffering a hamstring injury.

Ruling the waves: A New Zealand boat turns against the wind down under

hours, 36 minutes and 56 seconds, set by American skipper Jim Kilroy in Kialoa in 1975, was unlikely to be threatened, race officials said.

If it won, declarer would be on a diamond finesse for an overtrick. If it lost, all the trumps would be out and West would find himself in an unenviable position. A diamond lead would be into declarer's tenace; a heart or club lead would permit a ruff-suff. Either way, the slam would be in the bag.

(Answers tomorrow)

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Southern Africa leaders urge end to U.S. aid for UNITA

LUSAKA (R) — Southern African leaders meeting Tuesday urged U.S. President-elect George Bush to end support for Jonas Savimbi's UNITA rebels in Angola.

Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, chairman of the six front-line states, opened a one-day meeting in Lusaka called to review the regional situation since the signing of accords last week on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and independence for Namibia.

"We hope that President-elect Bush will declare to our satisfaction that his administration will not continue to support bandits of UNITA," Kaunda said.

So far the United States, which arranged the peace talks, has made it clear its aid to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) will continue until the Angolan government reaches a settlement

with Savimbi.

"While the United States chaired the meetings, we cannot forget it was the Reagan administration which brought about the linkage of Cuban troops to Namibia's independence," Kaunda said.

"They will merely be undoing the wrong they did to all of us... we want to be left alone, we want aid not for supporting bandits but for our economies."

Heads of state from Angola, Botswana, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe arrived for the meeting. Oliver Tambo, president of the South African black nationalist movement African National Congress (ANC), and South West Africa People's Orga-

nisation (SWAPO) President Sam Nujoma, an important figure in Namibian independence, were also present.

Appeal to U.N.

Kaunda called on U.S. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to implement the U.N. peace plan for Namibia without being influenced by pressure from Security Council members to cut the size of a planned monitoring force.

Kaunda said Perez de Cuellar should "not get daunted by what others who are more powerful than us are saying at the moment."

The council's five permanent members — Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union and the United States — are urging a reduction in the size of the proposed force of 7,500 troops, which will be deployed in Namibia April 1

when the countdown to independence begins.

Diplomats said Kaunda's words reflected regional fears that South Africa would use its powerful presence to influence the result of the territory's pre-independence elections.

Signs have grown in recent months that the front-line states are having difficulty forging a common strategy towards South Africa as the peace talks in southern Africa have moved ahead.

President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, whose country has been virtually paralysed by the activities of South African-backed rebels since 1980, broke a taboo by meeting President P.W. Botha in September.

South Africa is now giving military aid to Mozambique to help fight the rebels which it once supported and which neutral observers believe still have links to Pretoria's military intelligence.



Mourners gather at the grave of one of the more than 55,000 victims of the earthquake that hit Soviet Armenia Dec. 7.

Moscow pursues probe into 'incited violence' in Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (AP) — The Soviet government has sent hundreds of prosecutors to Azerbaijan to investigate charges that local officials had thugs incite ethnic violence against Armenians to cover up corruption, Pravda said Monday.

Pravda, the Soviet Union's official Communist Party newspaper, also reported that the fleeing Communist Party chief of Azerbaijan's Keshak region had been captured by a military patrol after it fired at his car to stop him. The newspaper did not give the official's name, but said he was found to be carrying cash equivalent to several years of his salary.

In Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, 213 party members have been disciplined for failing to cool ethnic violence aimed at the Armenian minority, Pravda said. Thirteen members were expelled from the party and 121 other people held responsible for permitting the violence were fired from their jobs, the newspaper said.

Pravda blamed Azerbaijan thugs and government officials protecting them for inciting the ethnic strife to cover up corruption.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring

Armenia, earthquake survivors and emergency workers shivered in tents and unheated buildings Monday as a blizzard cut roads into the area, according to Izvestia, the official government newspaper.

Freezing temperatures dropped sharply and were expected to reach minus 15 degrees Celsius (5 F), Soviet television reported. Campfires and emergency stoves were providing the only warmth, because steam-heating plants that heated the cities were destroyed in the Dec. 7 earthquake.

Despite the weather, survivors continued to search for missing relatives among the dead, the wounded, and the displaced.

One widowed father tracked down his infant son, who was only five days old when the quake destroyed the Leninakan maternity hospital where he was born, killing everyone but him. Dug from the ruins after being buried for two days and nights, the baby boy was still wearing a wrist name tag, the official Soviet news agency TASS reported.

Oganev Gevorgyan's father found him in a Yerevan hospital with a broken arm and leg.

Tens of thousands of Armenians fled Azerbaijan in the

weeks before the quake after Azerbaijan officials failed to rein in ethnic unrest. An unknown number of Armenians from Azerbaijan were living with relatives when the quake hit.

John Bush's visit

U.S. President-elect George Bush's son and grandson returned to the United States from Armenia Monday, with the younger Bush saying the visit enabled him to feel the real meaning of Christmas.

John E. Bush and his son, George, 12, had flown to the Armenian capital of Yerevan on a relief flight Friday. They toured the disaster zone in a bus, stopping at a children's hospital to deliver candy bars and gifts.

"I think we did some good for our country," the elder Bush said at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Of the earthquake victims, he said, "we're doing good for them in a specific way, so I was privileged."

Their flight was organized by Americans, a relief organization in New Canaan, Connecticut. Steve Johnson, a vice president of Americans, said the flight carried about \$3 million worth of supplies, mostly medical.

COLUMN

Braille through the feet

LONDON (AP) — British scientists say they are developing braille through-the-feet to help blind people avoid hazards like lamp-posts, road signs and trash cans and show them where to cross roads and find platform edges at train stations. The blind will "read" the warnings by treading on specially laid blister-type surfaces, said the transport and road research laboratory in Crowthorne, 64 kilometres southwest of London. The system of lettering by embossed dots that can be felt through the finger tips was invented by Frenchman Louis Braille in 1829.

Message of peace, USA to U.S.S.R.

CHICAGO (AP) — A U.S. businessman is collecting signatures from Americans for what he calls "America's greeting card to Russia." James Lawlor of Iowa has been undeterred by cold and blowing snow across the Midwestern United States in his eight-city tour to collect 2 million signatures. The scroll-like Christmas card is 13.7 metres by 3.6 metres. Lawlor, who owns a safety goggles manufacturing company, said he woke up one morning early this month with the idea of sending "a message of peace... from one superpower to another." The card says in Russian: "Dear Mr. (Soviet leader Mikhail) Gorbachev, we citizens of the United States of America wish to extend to you and the people of the Soviet Union our great appreciation for your courage and dedication in bringing peace to the world. Merry Christmas."

Boy caught in compactor dies

NEW YORK (AP) — A 13-year-old boy died after he became entangled in a compactor in a Bronx supermarket managed by his father, police said. Andre Duran was stuffing cardboard boxes into a compactor located in the back of C-Town Supermarket when he became caught in the machine Monday night, according to police officer Edward Feeney. The boy suffered a crushed chest, one arm was severed, and the other arm was broken, Feeney said. The victim's father, Andre Duran Sr., who manages the supermarket, put the child in his car and rushed him to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead, Feeney said.

Christmas at Sandringham

SANDRINGHAM (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II and 25 other members of the Royal Family attended Christmas services at the small church on her Sandringham estate. The royal Christmas festivities were moved to the Queen's country retreat, about 160 kilometres north of London, for the first time in 25 years because Windsor Castle was undergoing repairs. About 1,000 people were waiting in Sandringham Park when the royal family emerged from the church after the 40-minute service and several rushed to give the queen bouquets. Princess Diana enlisted her son, William, 6, to help the queen carry the flowers.

Davis promotes Rubenstein

LOS ANGELES (AP) — If Santa Claus were a movie mogul, Bette Davis would ask him to put the role of cosmetics queen Heloisa Rubenstein under her tree. "There is a great book on her. But I cannot sell the idea to anybody because all the men say, 'who is interested in woman who made cosmetics?'" A million women, that's who. "And she is fascinating," Miss Davis, 80, said. The actress was among members of the Los Angeles cultural scene who were asked by the Los Angeles Times what they would ask for if St. Nick was the ultimate patron who could Ok a project regardless of cost.

1988's most watchable men

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Donald Trump, Paul Newman and Mel Gibson are among the year's 10 most watchable men, a women's group said Monday. The 10 most watchable men of 1988 represent a variety of attributes that include attractiveness and success, said Sunny Mallery, president of the 15,000-member Manwatchers Inc. "They want it all," and this year's list has it, Mallery said. "Big bulging muscles have never been important, but now dress grooming and keeping in good physical shape has become much more important. But women seem to be looking more at looks," Mallery said.

No breakthroughs expected at SAARC summit in Islamabad

By Kathy Gannon

The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Senior officials from members of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) say they don't anticipate any major breakthroughs at this week's annual summit.

But the three-day session that opens Thursday will provide a forum for the first face-to-face meeting between new Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her Indian counterpart, Rajiv Gandhi.

India and Pakistan are the Asian subcontinent's dominant powers, and they've feuded over territory and other issues for decades.

Both prime ministers are from a "new generation" of leaders in the region. They grew up after their countries were formed in 1947 when British-ruled India was partitioned into predominantly Hindu India and overwhelmingly Muslim Pakistan.

One lingering dispute between the two countries, which have gone to war three times since independence, is the mountainous Kashmir region. Pakistan occupies territory

that India claims is an integral part of its Kashmir state.

Sardar Jayram Khan, president of the Pakistan-controlled area of Kashmir, contended Monday that the planned agenda for this week's conference does not include discussion of Kashmir's status. But he said officials and citizens from the Pakistani side of Kashmir would stage peaceful demonstrations during the seven-day summit.

SAARC foreign ministers were to meet Tuesday and Wednesday to finalise the summit agenda that is expected to include discussions of cultural exchanges, double taxation and regional trade.

Kashmir, once one of India's largest princely states, has been a disputed territory since the 1947 partition. A vote at that time was supposed to give Kashmir's people the right to decide whether the state would become independent, join Pakistan or become part of India.

Disputed election results left the state divided.

Khan contended that on both sides of the border, people want a second chance to vote on their

political status.

The Kashmir dispute has not been discussed by the South Asia cooperation group since the organisation was started four years ago, Khan said.

Bhutto and Gandhi plan to hold informal talks on the final day of the conference.

Bhutto told the Associated Press earlier that Pakistan had begun talks with India over an agreement that would protect each country's nuclear installations from attack by the other nation.

SAARC, formally launched in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, in 1985, has five members besides India and Pakistan: Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives.

Since its formation, the group has conducted annual summits, but lower-level delegations meet more frequently to discuss matters of regional concern, such as ecology, mutual trade and fighting terrorism.

SAARC gives its smaller members a forum for expressing matters of concern to them in a region dominated by the giant, India.



Noboru Takeshita

Takeshita reshuffles cabinet

TOKYO (AP) — Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita appointed the head of the parliament's ethics committee as justice minister Tuesday, in an effort to restore public confidence in the wake of a widespread political and financial scandal.

The naming of Takashi Hasegawa, 76, head of a Diet body on political ethics, to the top justice post was part of a cabinet shuffle described by analysts as routine.

The new cabinet was announced after the end of an extraordinary session of the Diet. There were 15 new names among the 20 cabinet appointees, but key officials such as Foreign Minister Soumei Ueno, 66, Finance Minister Tatsuhiro Murayama, 73, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Keizo Ohuchi, 51, retained their posts.

Takeshita's popularity has been buffeted by the passage of a controversial tax reform programme and by a scandal, in which influential politicians profited from transactions in unlisted shares in Recruit-Cosmos Company, a real estate firm.

Ohuchi, announcing the new cabinet lineup, said Takeshita was keeping his promises to tighten political discipline.

"He is determined to restore public confidence by aggressively dealing with the matter of political ethics," Ohuchi said in a nationally televised news conference.

An early-December poll in the newspaper Mainichi Shimshun showed his government's approval rating had slumped to 18 per cent from 30 per cent when Takeshita took office in November 1987. Takeshita himself had an aide who profited in Recruit-Cosmos share transactions, but the prime minister denied any personal involvement.

Appointment of the justice minister would be the key, said political analyst Tetsuro Morohashi. He said the minister would "affect the investigation into the Recruit scandal."

International trust

"I am aware that the public is losing confidence in politicians, business leaders and public officials," Hasegawa said in a news conference following his appointment. "It is a serious matter to rectify it. For Japan to be trusted in the international arena, we have to start with establishing a trustworthy political system."

Apart from Justice Ministry appointment, analysts said the reshuffle was a routine move and no significant changes in government policies were expected from it.

"An annual reshuffle of cabinet posts is a firmly established custom in Japan," said Seizaburo Sato, a political science professor at Tokyo University. "Takeshita doesn't want to upset the status quo."

Mexican prison riot death toll reaches 25

MEXICO (AP) — Authorities have denied any knowledge of how five inmates died after they were videotaped while in police custody during a prison riot that killed 25 people.

"I cannot explain this to you. No, no, we have no information on the matter," Francisco Flores, a spokesman for the Nayarit state government, said Monday in a telephone interview.

The five inmates were captured during an assault Friday night by special police commando teams — the fox and scorpion squads — that quelled a two-day uprising at the Venustiano Carranza state penitentiary, 800 kilometres northwest of Mexico City.

Freed hostage Patricia Castillo, a clerk in the prison law office, said Monday the Fox squad entered the prison "shooting indiscriminately. The squad was very angry because they (the inmates) had killed their commander. I was very scared."

She was among about 19 hostages seized Thursday by a small group of inmates to protest the denial of Christmas pardons for good behaviour.

Officials at first said the inmates died during two assaults on the prison. But according to a witness and two hostages and a videotape made by a U.S. television NBC network news crew, only one assault occurred and many prisoners were still alive afterward. Several of those prisoners were later listed as dead, according to government spokesmen.

Some prisoners' bodies had up to 10 bullet wounds, the government news agency Notimex said.

The death toll was given Friday night as six, but Saturday jumped to 22, then 24. A state government spokesman said Monday the confirmed toll was 25.

One witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the prisoners captured after the assault were questioned in a park outside the prison, then taken back inside. Members of the Fox team also entered the prison, and more than 30 gunshots were heard after that.

Officials said 21 inmates died during the assault, but the NBC videotape showed 13 prisoners lying outside the prison being questioned by police. All were alive, although at least two appeared to have suffered bloody wounds.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Gorbachev reappears after 15-day absence

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev reappeared in public Monday after a rare, 15-day absence from public events and Soviet television news coverage. In news film of his meeting Monday with the head of the West German Communist Party, Gorbachev appeared smiling, rested and healthy. He looked shocked and saddened the last time he appeared in public, after viewing the carnage to earthquake-stricken Armenia Dec. 11. He also erupted in anger on Soviet television that night when asked about ethnic strife between Armenians and Azerbaijanis continuing despite the earthquake.

Soviet cargo ship docks with Mir

MOSCOW (R) — An unmanned cargo ship carrying supplies docked with the Soviet Union's orbiting space station Mir Tuesday, TASS news agency reported. The Progress-39 vehicle, launched from earth two days ago, docked at 8.35 a.m. Moscow time (0535 GMT) next to the space research Module Kvant which is attached to Mir, the Soviet news agency said.

Cypriot tanker ablaze off Sri Lanka

CANBERRA (R) — All 39 crew were rescued from the blazing 250,000-tonne Cypriot tanker Boni 800 kilometres southeast of Sri Lanka after fire broke out in the engine room, an Australian sea safety centre spokesman said Tuesday. He said the Greek tanker Promitheas picked up the Boni's Mayday call and passed it on to the centre's office in Perth, Western Australia, before rescuing the 39 crew. The Boni was loaded with 150,000 tonnes of condensate in Malaysia and Sumatra and was heading for Puerto Rico. The spokesman said he believed the Boni was still on fire. Promitheas was standing by awaiting further instructions.

Castro to attend Perez inauguration

CARACAS (R) — Cuban President Fidel Castro will attend the inauguration of Venezuelan President-elect Carlos Andres Perez Feb. 2, state television said Monday. The government-owned Venezolana Television (VTV) station reported Castro will be among the heads of government present when Perez is sworn in as Venezuela's seventh president in 30 years of democratic rule. Following his election Dec. 4 Perez said he favoured a full restoration of relations with Cuba.

Nicaraguan coalition seeks talks with Ortega

SAN JOSE (AP) — Nicaraguan opposition leaders said Monday they want to make a peace proposal to President Daniel Ortega next week. In a letter addressed to assistant foreign minister Victor Hugo Tinoco, leaders of the Democratic Centre coalition requested an interview with Ortega for Jan. 4. The coalition had sent the same request to Ortega through Nicaragua's Costa Rica ambassador, Saul Arana, Dec. 19. Octaviano Cesar told the AP in a telephone interview. However, he said, the government has not replied. The peace proposal calls for the formation of a "reconstruction commission" made up of business, labour and government leaders.

Pinochet offers to discuss changes

SANTIAGO (AP) — President Augusto Pinochet's military government has offered to meet with Chilean opposition leaders who want to assist the transition to democracy with constitutional changes. Interior Minister Carlos Caceres Monday night agreed to the meeting on Jan. 3. But he vetoed any participation by Luis Maira, a leftist leader whose newly-formed wide Front of Socialist left includes members of the outlawed Communist Party. Caceres announcement was the first time in five years that the 15-year-old military government has agreed to talk formally to the opposition.